Interview with Robert S. Dillon

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROBERT S. DILLON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Bob, to start with, I would appreciate a brief account of your background.

DILLON: My family came from the Middle West. My mother and father were both born in Coffeyville, Kansas. I was born in Chicago during a brief sojourn for the family. I came to Washington when I was three weeks old and have always lived either in Washington or in northern Virginia. I mention the Middle West because there must be some of that in me, but I really consider myself a Washingtonian. I went to a Washington high school—Western High School, as did my wife, Sue, whom I married in 1951. It is now called Duke Ellington School. In those days Western was one of the preeminent schools in the District. I would guess that a third of the student body when I attended Western came from the Virginia suburbs. Of course, the suburbs then were not as heavily populated as they are today. In the 1940's, Washington was a city different from today in the sense that people from the suburbs came to the city to “do everything”—shopping, entertainment or as in my case, education.

So I grew up with people whose fathers worked for the government. Among them were a surprising number of politicians and congressmen and military officers, and even a few Foreign Service Officers. My father was a lawyer in private practice. But joining the

Foreign Service was almost a natural consequence of my environment; certainly it was much more natural than for many people because I grew up in a government atmosphere.

I started my college career in 1946 at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. After my freshman year, I went into the Army for eighteen months. After discharge, I decided not to continue at W&L—it was an all male school at the time—and transferred to Duke University, joining my future wife, from whence I graduated in 1951. That was during the Korean War. I had planned to go to law school—”planned” is perhaps too grand a word. In fact, I considered law school but didn't have strong feelings about what I wanted to do. Just before graduating from Duke, I came to Washington, having decided to re-enter the military service because the Korean War was on. Having served for eighteen months as an enlisted man in a rifle company, all of it in the US, I was going to be careful about what the military might be willing to offer. I was looking for something more interesting than my previous experience. In the course of discussing options for officers' training programs I was recruited by a US government agency for a program in Taiwan that assisted Chinese Nationalist irregular forces. They were looking for civilians or for officers who could be seconded to a civilian status, so that there would be no direct connection with the American military services. I qualified because I had some military experience—I had been a small arms instructor for the last six months of my Army tour.

We went through training and then to Taiwan. I spent the last year of the war on one of the small off-shore islands on the China coast—Tachen. Others went to Quemoy and Matsu. My island was the most northern one near the mouth of the Hangzhou Bay. We trained and advised Chinese irregulars in raiding operations along the China coast. The idea was to deflect the Chinese communist army from Korea. Half of us were civilian and half were serving military officers. There were no distinctions among the group. We all wore Chinese military uniforms; our counterparts were Chinese officers. The major I worked for—Robert Barrow—who later became a full General and Commandant of the Marine Corps.

In most career services, including the Foreign Service, and certainly the military services, when members of those services are detached to work for another organization, you have to be very suspicious because the best officers will not be volunteered. The exception will occur if there is a senior service officer who is personally interested in the project and wants to do his best to make it succeed. The Marines are not perfect, but they had a philosophy which I always liked. They believed that if they were going to be represented in non-Marine groups or organizations, they would put their best foot forward and make their best officers available. Barrow was a good example of this philosophy. He had been an outstanding company commander early in the war in Korea. In World War II, he had been with an organization called SACO in China, behind Japanese lines. So he was well versed in irregular warfare operations and was recognized as an outstanding officer. In general, all the people I worked with were good.

Q: What was your impression of the nationalist irregulars?

DILLON: Mine was a worm's eye view. We were all very young—I was one of the youngest. I was not greatly impressed by the Nationalist officers. They were scornful and inconsiderate of their troops. The troops were brave and suffered hardships with extraordinary good nature. I always think of the Chinese soldier as a little guy walking up a steep hill with a big mortar plate on his back. His officer walked up the hill, breathing heavily, staggering under the weight of a sidearm. We were not impressed with the Nationalist officers. There were occasional good ones.

We quickly became very cynical about political statements that we would hear. We were not of course very sophisticated, but we would hear unrealistic statements about how the Chinese Nationalists were prepared to unleash these mighty forces. Many of these statements came from American Republican conservatives. General MacArthur talked about landing a couple of divisions on the mainland. My group was involved on the ground, and indeed, in combat, with irregular Chinese nationalist troops. It was our considered judgement—coming from a bunch of men the ages of 23 to 31 (we considered the latter

to be a very old man)—that no Nationalist intervention would have any effect on mainland China, except perhaps to get us into a lot more trouble than we were in already. None of us believed that the Nationalist government really wanted to fight.

One interesting aspect of our little operation was that we spent a lot of time trying to persuade the Chinese to do battle. We also had a hard time convincing them to attack “hard” targets. They preferred “soft” targets. Once when we did succeed in convincing General Hu Sung-nan to attack a truly significant target, our troops took a terrific beating. It was disaster, primarily due to the tactical incompetence of the officers who led the attack. They landed on the wrong beach—events like that do occur. The reconnaissance was faulty, the maps were wrong. We landed on a sandbar across the river from our target and became exposed to enemy fire without cover. The Nationalists took a lot of casualties. This confirmed to them that it was dumb to do anything the Americans suggested. It made it that much more difficult to persuade them to attack hard targets although we continued to attack soft ones. My own duties were primarily reconnaissance and intelligence gathering.

The Korean war ended in July, 1953. Stalin died in March and I remember sitting at our camp listening to that announcement on the radio. Our immediate feeling was that his death was significant even though we didn't know precisely how. The end of the war a few months later gave the Americans an opportunity to end these irregular operations. It was then that the Nationalists became very active. Indeed the largest raid conducted by the Nationalist irregulars occurred after the war in August 1953. No Americans participated directly in that operation; it was disaster despite the bravery of the troops involved. The Nationalists were afraid that peace would break out. I talk about this period of my life because it is important to remember that my generation was very much influenced by the Cold War and the Korean War. Most of the Americans I was with on the off-shore islands were veterans of World War II, some not as combat troops, but certainly as members of a military service then the Korean War came along very quickly. As a consequence, even though I have just vented some cynicism about the Chinese Nationalists, we grew up with

the strong feeling that we lived in a world constantly in conflict and in a sense war seemed very natural to us. As my colleagues and I went on to other careers, we never forgot this conflict between “good” and “evil” with us being “good”, and our conviction that somehow, the “good” guys would win. It took me years to see the world through a different prism. Eventually, and I would guess that this was over twenty years ago, I came to see that the view of the world in East-West conflict terms was misleading and it was dangerous for us to see it in those terms. The United States constantly made policy mistakes, for example in Vietnam because of that mistaken view.

I had never heard of the “regionalists”, but in recent years, I have been told that there were “regionalists” in contrast to the “East-West conflict” believers. I am essentially a “regionalist”. Most of the problems I have been involved with over the years were essentially regional problems. One of the constants was Washington's tendency, especially at the senior political level, to see the world in east-West contest terms. It could have been Cyprus, Lebanon, Palestine, whatever. The tendency was to view each of these issues in an East-West context. Henry Kissinger was one of the preeminent policy makers who fell into this trap.

I had married Sue Burch and we had two children. When we returned to Washington after 26 months in the Far East—the second child was born in Taiwan—I wondered what I would do with my life. Oddly enough, I considered a military career, but I thought that it might be a little dull. I was interested in foreign policy. My views were a little naive, but when you are in your '20s, you tend to have a skewed view of how the world works. In any case, I took the Foreign Service exam at Georgetown University. To my surprise, I passed it; I had not prepared for it. I had been an English major at Duke. I passed the oral exam as well and decided to join the Foreign Service.

I entered relatively quickly in February 1956. In July, 1955 the first class of entrants for several years had been processed. Prior to that, there had not been any new entrants for three years, mainly due to McCarthy's antics and partly to budgetary problems. When I

passed the exam, the department was trying to catch up, classes were relatively large and the whole recruitment process was accelerated. Less than a year passed between the time I passed the exam and my reporting date which was unheard of before or since.

I was still considering law school; I even did a semester at George Washington. That was enough to convince me that my future did not lie in the law.

When I entered the Foreign service, I had just turned 27. In retrospect, I would guess that I was fairly typical of my entering class. The average age of the class was 26; there were some older. The oldest was 31. Ray Eiselt, whom I remember very well, and a couple of the others were veterans of World War II. He had been a bomber pilot. I was typical in that I was too young to have been in World War II, but had been in the military after the war. I think everyone, except the one woman and one fellow who was 22, had had some working experience, mostly military. The majority of the class had been overseas previously, mostly in Korea or Japan; a couple had been in Germany. I wouldn't suggest that we were particularly sophisticated. Certainly not stupid. But the majority of the class shared the view of the bipolar world that I described earlier. We believed that we were in a contest with the Communist world. When people discussed assignments devoutly to be wished for (except London and Paris), they would mention posts on the periphery of the Soviet Union or places that were seen as a locus of East-West conflict. Those were the desirable assignments. A number of my colleagues went to the Refugee Relief Program in Europe. I would have been very excited by something like that. But my situation, which was probably not that unusual at the time, was that I had taken the old written examination in Spanish, but failed by three or four points (I think I got a grade in the high '60s). So I was in the Foreign Service on probation subject to passing the language examination. Therefore, I requested an assignment to a Spanish speaking post, even though I really would have greatly preferred the Middle east or Europe or the far east; I really didn't want to go to Latin America. But I was afraid if I didn't, I would never pass the language exam. So I was assigned to Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela where we had a small consulate (in Eastern Venezuela). I had never heard of Puerto La Cruz. I remember that when

Max Krebs handed out the assignments slips to our class, everyone seemed to get an interesting assignment except me. I asked him where the post was. He admitted he did not know! We soon discovered where it was and off I went. This was a clear case of the “grass being always greener on the other side of the fence”; I was convinced that I had been given the worst assignment. In fact, I accomplished my objectives. In a few months, when I retook the language exam, I passed it and my Spanish was generally acceptable (depending in part on the subject matter).

In the Consulate, which did a lot of the traditional consular work, I did some reporting which was what interested me. People coming to visit the Consulate would probably have thought that I was fluent in Spanish. John Mullin, the other Vice-Consul and I were fluent on some subjects. The trouble was that we would periodically be drawn into discussions on other subjects where our vocabulary was inadequate and then our language weaknesses were exposed. The Consulate officers consisted of John and myself, and the consul Ernie Gutierrez—an old time and very knowledgeable consular officer who had spent his career in Latin America. His wife was from Ecuador and both were bilingual and very much at home in the Latin culture. Puerto La Cruz was very difficult. It was a hardship post and deserved that designation fully. During the few months I was there with Gutierrez and Mullin, (and after my wife and three children arrived), it was a rather a happy post. Gutierrez was a relaxed and confident officer, who was willing to spend some time with a newcomer to the area, trying to teach him something about Latin America and consular work. John was a wonderful young man whose company I enjoyed thoroughly.

After about three months, Gutierrez was transferred. We had an inter-regnum for probably two months. John Mullin became the acting principal officer—he had been in the Service six months longer than I. He took hold of the ship in an acceptable fashion under the circumstances. We also had a couple of staff officers at the post; I think we managed to get by all right. We certainly tried very hard.

It was during this period that we were inspected by Henry Stebbins. He was a seasoned officer who later became Ambassador in Nepal and Uganda. Much later he disappeared from a ship in the Atlantic under mysterious circumstances. Stebbins was very bright and very nice. He arrived in Puerto La Cruz, took one look at the appalling living conditions and another look at the work we were trying to do. Instead of conducting a conventional inspection, he rolled up his sleeves and for five days worked along side us trying to improve our operations, both consular and administrative. He was very supportive; for better or worse, he seemed to have liked John and me. We had dinner together every night and he became a colleague although Henry Stebbins was 25-30 years older.
We never discussed the inspection report nor the individual reports on each FSO that inspectors were supposed to write in those days. Later, I was pleased to see glowing reports on John Mullin and myself and on the post in general. That turned out to be every important to me, although I had no way of knowing at the time what importance these reports would have. After the inter-regnum the new Principal Officer arrived. He had come from Germany where he had been a communications supply officer in the military at the end of the War. He had remained in Germany and upon discharge from the Army, had joined the Mission in Berlin as a consular clerk and eventually became integrated into the Foreign Service. He had a German wife. Their first assignment outside Germany was Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela.

I think it is fair to say that he did not like Eastern Venezuela. From Germany to Eastern Venezuela was just too abrupt a change. So he was very unhappy. He resented very much that Mullin and I were typical junior Foreign Service officers; we were positive about everything—perhaps unrealistically so. We had all the enthusiasm of youth; he was at least ten years older. He had had two years of college and was hoping to become an engineer until the Army took him during World War II. But he always retained some of the qualities of an engineer—he kept a slide-rule with him at all times, for example. In the Army, he had risen to the rank of Major. So he didn't have a formal education in liberal arts or a practical one in foreign affairs. He was by then an FSO-6. You will recall that

once upon a time, FSO-6 was the entrance grade, then it got shifted back to FSO-8. This man who had to work his way back to FSO-6 probably resented that John and I were only one grade below him, but ten years his junior. In plain English, he didn't like us. So there were tremendous tensions in the office, which got so bad that Mullin had to go on TDY to Maracaibo just to get him away from the consul. That may have saved his sanity, but it left me alone with the consul. That association finally culminated in a miserable efficiency report. It was the kind that normally gets officers selected out. I am sure that was his intention because he said quite clearly that I was not suited for the Foreign Service. Had it not been for Stebbins' inspection report that had been placed in my personnel file, I think my career would have been over right then and there.

Q: That was of course one of the main functions of the Inspection Corps in those days. There were a lot of tensions particularly between those officers who had been promoted from the Staff Corps and those who had entered through the examination route. The two groups had different educational backgrounds, different outlooks, etc. It was endemic to the system. DILLON: One of the results of this experience is that throughout my career I have had a positive view of the Inspection Corps. For some reason, I have almost always benefitted from inspections, although nothing like the first one. Stebbins was so good, in terms of intelligence, experience and wisdom, that he gave both Mullin and myself a very positive view of the Foreign Service's senior officers. Today, if you are in a small post, you are most likely to be in constant contact with the Embassy or Washington by telephone or cable. In the 1950s, that was not the case. We had no contact with the outside world. Even Caracas was another world. Occasionally, you might get to Caracas to carry a pouch. Long distance telephone calls were not made; to make one was considered a major event. Classified communications meant laborious encoding on a one time pad for a telegram sent through commercial channels. Occasionally, a member of the Embassy's Political Section would come through Puerto La Cruz and he would be interested in talking to us about what was going on. We were always impressed with such a political officer; the Embassy seemed so distant. We felt very isolated. The Consul did not encourage any

communication with the "outside world". So seeing an Embassy representative, who might drop by every couple of months, and Stebbins, who spent five days with us, was all we saw of the Foreign Service. Fortunately, it was a very positive view because had we seen the Foreign Service only as represented by our Principal Officer, we would have been quite negative.

Q: How did you, at this stage in your career, view the Bureau of American Republics Affairs (ARA)?

DILLON: I didn't really like ARA. That was probably very unfair and probably went back to my feeling, tinged heavily with unrealism, that ARA was not in the mainstream and that there were a lot of other places in the world much more important—Cairo, Beirut, Berlin, etc. I felt we were stuck in another world. A lot of ARA people spent their whole careers in Latin America. I didn't want to follow in their steps. I was alarmed when a well-meaning Embassy political officer said to me one day that he thought that I was doing well and I might be transferred to the Political Section in Caracas after my two years in Puerto La Cruz. I thought that certainly would be an improvement, but not what I wanted really to do. So yes, I was quite negative about the region. I also felt in general that the ARA crowd was politically very conservative. I would say that most of my colleagues—that is Foreign Service officers of my age—viewed ourselves as "liberals". "Liberal" in those days meant fairly mainstream politics. We had an essentially liberal orientation despite the Cold War and the strong anti-communist and anti-Soviet views which we all shared. But the ARA people seemed to me very much wedded to the existing power structure in the countries to which they were assigned. They had become accustomed to the chasms in the societies. This was before the days when the Catholic Church took up the "revolution liberation theology" and social activism. The Church was very conservative and very much opposed to change. Within the Venezuelan Church, there was a split between the priests who were of Italian background and those who were natives. In very oversimplified terms, the Italians were rather "liberal" and concerned about social issues while the Venezuelan hierarchy was very much wedded to the existing order. It seemed to us and our worm's eye view that

the senior officers in ARA were too supportive of the status quo. I didn't really want to be part of that.

You have to remember that these were the days when Perez Jimenez was the Venezuelan dictator. If there was ever a country in the hands of criminals, it was Venezuela in the Jimenez period. You could literally say that the good guys were in jail and the crooks were walking the streets.

There was no professional pouch service between Puerto La Cruz and Caracas so that every few months each American officer had the opportunity to escort the pouch. One time, when it was my turn, I took the pouch and spent most of my time with the officer in charge of the consular section. He was a very nice man and was our nominal supervisor. I also made a quick visit to the political section for a brief debriefing. During this time, I was introduced to the Station Chief—the head of the CIA contingent in the Embassy. He was interested in knowing what was going on in our province. During our conversation, I found out that he had been an FBI agent in Latin America during the war. As opposed to any other part of the world, in Latin American the Bureau had been given responsibility for intelligence and counter-intelligence—foreign intelligence work that in other parts of the world had been given to OSS or other agencies. The Station Chief was a man in his mid-40s; he appeared to me to have a “cop” mentality. His job was to run intelligence operations and to collect information for his country, but he sat there talking like a policeman whose job was to keep rowdy folks from doing bad things. I was greatly unimpressed with that approach and it reinforced my view that the bureaucrats assigned to Latin America had their eye on the wrong ball. That may have been unfair to my State Department colleagues and others, but that was my impression at the time.

The Embassy, with the exception of a couple of the political officers, found it difficult to believe that anything would happen to undermine the current Venezuelan regime. The head of the Securidad, Pedro Estrada—an awful man—(a very repressive organization run by a bright and ruthless man) was widely quoted by the Ambassador as if he were the

fountain of all wisdom and the source of all information. He undoubtedly knew a lot, but in the Oriente and I suspect in other parts of Venezuela as well, Estrada was considered a monster and a symbol for most Venezuelans of all that was wrong in the country. I was very uncomfortable with that situation although it would be a great exaggeration to suggest that I predicted that the Perez-Jimenez regime would fall in January 1958.

Before the final blow, there had been periodic small coup attempts by low level military groups, all of which were quickly suppressed. In January 1958, something new and different happened; strong anti-regime feelings developed in the military in the Oriente. The coup in January was closer to a genuine revolution than previous coups. All of a sudden the streets of Puerto La Cruz were filled with machete-waiving peasants; the atmosphere became very tense and dangerous. There were three armed organizations at the time: a) the regular army, b) La Guardia Nacional, which was created as sort of a balance to the regular army and c) the Securidad.

The army sat back and watched the peasants assault Securidad headquarters. When it was clear that the peasants and the workmen were not about to give up, the army joined them. La Guardia Nacional stayed in its barracks and never made a move. Securidad headquarters was assaulted; the Securidad men fled their building and were torn apart by the crowds in the street. Some were hung on lamp-poles. The hatred and the anger against these men was overwhelming. I am sure similar events have occurred in other places, but we had a personal and close view of the violence and it has always stuck in my memory. There was also a lot of anti-Italian feeling which was ironic, because the Italian immigrants appeared to me to have brought a lot of needed skills and indeed some had brought fairly liberal political concepts. But they were resented, partly because the aristocratic Italian Ambassador had been stupid enough to identify himself very closely with the current regime. So the Italian immigrants became endangered. On the road from Puerto La Cruz to El Tigre, which was 50-60 miles south, an Italian was hung on every telephone pole. It was a very brutal affair.

While all this was going on, the American Consul sat in the vault of the American Consulate and reformed the passport files. In the meantime, Mullin and I were out in the streets, doing what we could because we were very concerned about the safety of American citizens. We had many in our district. There were some nasty incidents in which some American oil workers were seized and beaten with machetes. We did what we could to help those Americans. One reason I have such a vivid memory of those days is because in the damaging efficiency report to which I referred earlier, the Consul stated that he had asked me to reform the passport files and that I had never gotten around to doing it and that therefore he had to do it himself.

The revolution succeeded and ended ten years of military dictatorship, starting Venezuela down the path of a fairly democratic regime. Romulo Betancourt, who had been ousted ten years earlier and had been exiled to Mexico and Puerto Rico, became President. During his time in P.R., he became well acquainted with and influenced by Mu#oz Marin, an American and a leading figure in Puerto Rico who became Betancourt's mentor. I was not present at Betancourt's return, but it must have been quite an event. It had been illegal to even mention his name in Venezuela. He flew into Caracas very shortly after Perez-Jimenez' fall—the whole government collapsed in a few days after the beginning of the revolution. Half a million people greeted him at the airport. After being a non-person for ten years, all of these people showed up at the airport alerted by word-of-mouth.

Q: What was going on in the American Consulate while all hell was breaking loose on the streets? Were there contacts with the Embassy?

DILLON: There was no contact with the Embassy. The staff was very busy; the contacts should have been made by the Principal Officer. In fact, he never called; he never sent a telegram; he just sat.

What we did to protect Americans was essentially to go to the Guardia Nacional headquarters to demand protection for our citizens. We had no leverage except the

prestige of the United States. You put on coat and tie for the occasion, stuff some Vice-Consul calling cards in your pocket, which we dropped on the desk of the Commander of the Guardia Nacional unit in Puerto La Cruz. We demanded protection for our citizens and cited various flagrant violations of law and order. We pretended to represent the President of the United States and in fact our bluff worked. The Guardia did provide protection to the Americans in our district. There was one oil engineer that concerned me particularly because he had been seized by a group of the revolutionaries and was being held hostage. The Guardia effected his release without much of a struggle, as I remember it.

The Americans in the oil installations took whatever protective measures they could and stayed in their homes. We pleaded with all Americans to stay off the streets, which most did. Fortunately, Americans were not a particular target; we were apprehensive of course, but we didn't have the feeling at the time that the people's anger would be turned against us. Despite the Embassy's closeness to the Perez-Jimenez regime, in Puerto La Cruz. at least, that did not seem to me a major factor. Furthermore, the people's anger against the Italians may have diffused any anti-American feeling. For unknown reasons, the Italian Ambassador, who was a titled individual—a Count or something—, had very foolishly permitted himself to be publicly associated with Perez-Jimenez and Estrada, in the few weeks before the revolution. So the crowd's fury was very much directed against the Italians, even though a dispassionate analyst might have reached the conclusion that the American government was much more supportive of the military regime than the Italians were. There may have been one or two anti-American incidents in Maracaibo and several in the Oriente—Americans being beaten—, but there was no major outbreak. We were of course shocked and troubled even by the few instances, but in retrospect and in light of some of my subsequent experiences, the Venezuela situation was tame particularly since in the Latin American scene it was unusual for the “giant of the North” not to be blamed for all negative situations. But we were not.

Later, when Vice-President Nixon visited Caracas, it was different ball-game. By that time, a lot of the anti-American feeling had developed and was then directed at Nixon.

Q: Let me return to the situation at the Consulate. While the revolution was going on the streets, did the Consul issue any orders or instructions?

DILLON: No. Mullin and I pretty much operated on our own. Nor did we get any instructions from the Embassy.

As how well or poorly we performed as the revolution continued, I don't think anyone knew. I certainly did not know how you went about advertising one's performance.

Q: How did you manage to escape ARA?

DILLON: There were two steps. On April 1, 1957, I was handed a telegram announcing that I was being transferred directly to Karamshar. I was delighted. It turned out to be a joke—an April Fool's day joke. The Consul was astounded by my obvious pleasure at the alleged new assignment. This episode certainly did not contribute to reducing tensions at the Consulate. But it did give me hope that such miracles can happen. Sometime later, a circular telegram was received seeking volunteers for Arabic, Turkish and Farsi language training. I immediately volunteered for all three, putting Turkish first. A few months later, I was notified that I had been accepted for Turkish language training, but that I would have to delay that training for another year. In the meantime, I was told that I would be given a year's economic training; I would be one the first officers that the Department was assigning under a new program of one year's work at a graduate school. I was given twenty-four hours to respond. It didn't take me that long to agree to the year's graduate work and I suggested Princeton, Harvard and Fletcher. A few weeks later, I was told that I had been accepted at Princeton for graduate work in economics. I stayed in Puerto La Cruz until late June—my tour in Venezuela lasted about 26 months. The last couple of months were very difficult because I was in such a hurry to get out.

I returned to the States and spent the ten weeks before starting at Princeton studying at George Washington University. This was done with the blessing of Frank Cash, a wonderful man in the Office of Personnel who helped restore my faith in the Foreign Service. The Department paid for the courses. Fortunately, my parents lived in Washington and so my wife, three children and I just moved in with them, reducing the financial burden of temporary quarters. We did this several times during our Foreign Service career. Now that I have been the host for such visits on several occasions, I am much more aware of the burdens than I was then. I signed up for three undergraduate economics courses at GWU for the summer and found them quite enjoyable. Then we moved to Princeton, where I had a wonderful year. The economics faculty didn't seem to mind that I was not very well prepared, particularly on the mathematics side. I didn't have too much trouble with economic substance, but I was relatively illiterate in mathematics. A brilliant professor by the name of William Baumol—probably the most brilliant man I have ever met—used to meet with me every Wednesday afternoon for a crash course in those fields of mathematics that I needed to understand for his lectures. To my surprise, I found that math was not as difficult as I had imagined. I did quite well in the economic courses and managed even to attend some courses on Middle East affairs. It was a great year; it was such a good year that I almost did not return to the Foreign Service. Someone suggested that if I wanted to stay for a second year, he could arrange a fellowship. I was sorely tempted, but in the final analysis decided to pursue the Foreign Service career.
I returned to Washington and FSI where I took the Turkish language course starting in September, 1959. The course was ten months long. During the first few months, I thought I had made a terrible mistake because I just didn't seem able to retain the vocabulary and I couldn't manipulate the sounds. After three or four months, something snapped and I made progress. After about six months, I was doing well with the language. There were nine of us studying Turkish; Foreign Service officers, someone from CIA, and a couple of military officers. It was too many; the class had to be broken up and teachers had to be added. There were two people who were far ahead of all of us; one was Duke Merriam who stayed in the Foreign Service for a few years and then went to work on the Hill and

the other one was a young Air Force officer who was a natural polyglot. These two were far ahead of everyone, but when the class was broken up, a third person was needed to go with these two outstanding students. I was chosen and it was probably the luckiest thing that ever happened to me. The result was that I was pressed, but our group finished miles ahead of all the others. We ended up being ranked “3-3”—professional level in both reading and speaking. I was very lucky because the other literally pulled me along. The other classes managed at best only to reach “2+”, even though a couple of the students later became very fluent in the language.

Duke Merriam, who remained a friend through the years, had spent a year studying economics at Harvard. He had been interested in Turkey for a long time; he had served in Amman and Munich. He had the view that we would go to Turkey and help them solve their miserable economic problems. My view of Turkey was more representative of a “Cold War” view of the world; I saw Turkey as being on the front line of “containment”. The US provided large amounts of assistance, both military and economic and I looked forward to the prospects of a very exciting tour.

There were two other Foreign Service officers, perhaps a couple of years younger than I, who were very interested in what later became known as “Pol-Mil” (political-military). They saw Turkey as an excellent place to begin their career in this new professional field. In one case, the officer was the son of an Air Force general who had been in charge of the first military assistance mission in Turkey. He had therefore lived in Ankara as a boy and that made Turkey an attraction. The Turks, in these days, were viewed as exotic. They had come out of the Korean War with an outstanding reputation for bravery. Their brigade had served outstandingly and for political reasons, great publicity was given to their exploits. So there was a lot of interest in Turkey. That country was also undergoing a great experiment in democracy. In 1950, Ismet Inonu allowed free elections. Adnan Menderes and his Democratic Party won the elections. During the '50s, Turkey made great progress. It received a lot of American assistance; democracy seemed fairly well established. By the late '50s, a terrible inflation had set in and serious political problems manifested

themselves. Opposition to Menderes grew strong; he reacted in a very autocratic fashion which ended in May 1960, when a military coup overthrew him. The Turkish language students had a view of Turkey, which I now recognize as having been romantic and sentimental. I suspect that today it would be more difficult to find a group willing to learn the language and devote much of their career to Turkey.

Q: It is true that during the period you describe much of the Foreign Service was driven by an almost missionary impulse. We thought we had something to contribute and the more difficult the country, the larger the challenge it became. We were not only interested in reporting events; we were going to be involved in fostering change!

DILLON: Right. We were very activist in our outlook. We were eager to be analytical reporters, but we also had a lot of the missionary spirit in us. We did think that we were going to change things. We saw that very much part of our mission.

Q: Let me now start by asking you about your first assignment after Turkish language training which was in Ismir from 1960 to 1962. What were your responsibilities there?

DILLON: I was the economic officer. In those days, Ismir was a fairly large Consulate General—now I think it is considerably smaller and may only be a Consulate. In the early '60s, we had a Consul General, a consular officer, a political officer and an economic officer and, as a matter of fact, while I was there the staff was increased with a politico-military officer. The latter was added to handle community relations created by the presence of a large number of US troops at the air force base. The staff may have been slightly too large, but Turkey was important in those days. We had a large aid programs with many Americans living in Turkey handling those programs. Treasury had a couple of officers at the Embassy and it was Washington's view that economic reporting was very important to the determination of its assistance and other policies.

I didn't at the time question the need for the job; I was delighted to have it. It was a very good job for someone who had just learned Turkish; my duties were not demanding so

that I had time to improve my language skills. I also had an opportunity to travel so that I could report on tobacco which was a major source for export to the United States where it was blended with our home grown varieties. We also had cotton in our region which is another commodity of great interest to American agriculture. On reflection, when I think about those long, fascinating reports I wrote on tobacco and cotton, I can't believe that any one could possibly have been interested.

There was some work related to commercial disputes, but that wasn't a heavy work load. Turkey's economic conditions were were in very bad shape. They had limited foreign exchange reserves, even with the very tight controls that they exercised. The key to success for a Turkish businessman was to obtain import permits; that objective became a game in itself. The confusing, multiple exchange rates made the permits very tricky, but also potentially very rewarding. There were different ways of getting permits, including bribery, which was a minor problem.

They were tricky about categories. I remember that soon after my arrival, I noticed large American ambulances in the streets. That struck me as somewhat odd. The explanation was that in Turkey then, and it is still true today, there was a shared cab system called the dolmus, which was something like the old American jitney system. It was a cheap source of transportation provided by independent operators who followed prescribed routes and therefore, once you understood the process, could take you anywhere. The busses were cheap, but in terrible condition and overcrowded. So I used the dolmus myself. Ambulances were used for this private transportation system because Turks could get import licenses for ambulances, but not for trucks, cars or busses. So some bright entrepreneur bought six ambulances and converted them into dolmus.

In Ankara trade complaints were a major workload generated by a variety of practices in both countries. I remember several concerning an American steel mill which had been sold to the Turks. First there were questions about the quality of the product and then there were questions of timely payment. The steel mill was from Minnesota so that some of the

complaints came to us via Senator Hubert Humphrey who was a major political figure. Although there were lots of crates and boxes lying around, the mill was never assembled and never used. We put great pressure on the Turks to pay for it and I think eventually they did.

Q: How were the relations with the American military?

DILLON: That was an active relationship. Ismir was the headquarters for LAND-Southeast, which was NATO's Southeastern command. There were a number of American officers assigned to that command. There were also small American support and intelligence detachments in our region. We also had the 6th ATAF, which was a NATO Air Wing, commanded by an American general. The general at LAND Southeast was a three star, and a two star general was at 6th ATAF. We probably had a couple of thousand Americans in the area.

In later years, it seemed to me that the Air Force became more sophisticated in handling community relations and in alerting and orienting its officers to the required sensitivities. In the early '60s, the Americans were very poor in these areas. They were naive, arrogant; so that the issue of community relations was a constant preoccupation. Our Consul General, Ken Byrnes, who had had similar pol-mil experiences before while serving in Europe, was very interested in Turkey although he had not had much background on the country. Ken in effect served as a political advisor to the Commanding General. I often attended their parties because they had a great lack of Turkish speaking personnel—they may have had one competent Turkish speaker. Since there were two of us at the C.G., one of us was always invited. I particularly remember that when the military would entertain, the problem was often the wives of the Turkish military because many of their husbands spoke passable English. So I became very expert in women's topics. I spent much time at these parties talking to the Turkish women because there were no other Americans who could communicate with them. The NATO officers and their Turkish counterparts spoke English together and I would spend the evening chatting with the women.

We did have problems, such as black-marketing, landlord issues—some got very nasty. The fault was not always on the American side, but Americans were not very well equipped to handle those problems. Turkey was in very severe economic straits, which fostered a certain resentment of foreigners, particularly those with access to the PX, which was a big issue. Americans were constantly under pressure, which was not sufficiently resisted, to provide Turks with goods from the PX and commissaries, either on a gift or sale basis. There was a tendency on the part of the American military officers to protect enlisted men who were caught in smuggling or black market operations. In later years, that changed entirely, but the military tradition required that loyalty flow down as well as up. That is understandable and laudable in certain circumstances, but for Turkey in those days it was a bad misjudgement. For example, the Commanding Generals' chauffeur—an American NCO—headed a very large black market operation, which was very successful and engaged in all kinds of nefarious activities including currency smuggling. When the guy was caught, the General's first reaction was to protect him from any Turkish prosecution. That was wrong. The Turks therefore had little confidence when we requested that the perpetrators be turned over to us for processing. We said that we had a system of justice, but what they saw was a system of protection. If we had been tougher with our troops and if it had been evident to the Turks that American military justice would work in such cases, the Turks would not have been so insistent on alleged violators being prosecuted in Turkish courts. We had constant problems on this issue. The “Status of Forces” agreement, stipulated that an American military man who was accused of a crime committed in the course of his duties was to be handled by American military justice. But if the deed was committed outside of his duties, that man would be subject to local authorities and law. In fact, in those days and for many years, the American military authorities maintained that all conduct was in the course of duty, thereby making the American military person untouchable by local authorities. So when an American military person, and it was usually an NCO, got caught in the middle of the night, he invariably showed up a couple of days later with a duty certificate, immunizing him from local jurisdiction. This devalued the duty certificate, which the Turks after a while just didn't

take seriously. These problems were very much part of our lives, since the Consulate General got involved in these disputes. When I returned to Turkey a few years later, it was clear to me that the American military had learned its lessons and these kinds of problems were greatly reduced. The Air Force, in particular, became more sophisticated in handling these community relation matters; they were much better at preparing people for life in Turkey, much smoother at handling the problems. They increased their Turkish language training—not that many were fluent, but a number would give it a try.

It was never clear to me what military value our NATO establishments had. Both were headquarters staffed by officers from seven or eight countries—not all NATO countries were represented. The troops were all Turkish. One of reasons the US continued to be interested in these headquarters was because these were organizations in which Greek and Turkish officers cooperated, which was rare. Greek officers were assigned to these headquarters and that seemed very important to Washington. Of course, whatever spirit of cooperation was developed, never survived the first Cyprus crisis in 1962. Nevertheless, I think those headquarters are still alive, even if their purposes are more mysterious now than they were in the '50s.

Q: Of course, these bases may have been in the Persian Gulf crisis, but they certainly weren't originally set up for those reasons.

DILLON: That is true. Originally, there was one operating base at Cigli which was being built at the time I was in Ismir. Missiles were to be located at that base; those were the missiles that were withdrawn following the Cuban Missile Crisis. We of course have always denied that a deal had been made with the Soviet Union; the Turks never believed us. The placing of those missiles cost a lot of money; the site was completed just before the Crisis, in October 1962. Within a couple of months of the USSR withdrawal of its missiles from Cuba, our Jupiter missiles were taken out of Turkey. So the whole thing was just a great waste of money. Although we said that the missiles were obsolescent, the Turks were very upset because they recognized for the first time that we were quite capable of

making a deal with the Soviets behind their backs on matters of direct interest to them. So that episode had a considerable negative impact on US-Turkish relations. Cigli became an Air Force base for a short time and then was converted to a civilian airport, which it is still. We then centered our air activities in Incirlik, which is in southern Turkey right outside of Adana. That airfield is very active; it is huge, staffed by a large American contingent and I am certain that its planes were involved in the Iraq war and the aftermath.

As for the political situation in Turkey during my first tour, the Turks, after World War II, moved down a democratic road. Ismet Inonu was the virtual dictator of the country from 1938 on—he had been Ataturk's lieutenant and had inherited his powers. To his great credit, he permitted free elections, partly because he thought that his Republican party (the lineal descendent of Ataturk's party) would win. In fact, it didn't; it was beaten by the Democratic Party, led by Adnan Menderes. The 50s were therefore the Menderes' years. The Western powers and the Americans in particular were very pleased by these developments. Menderes was a civilian who wanted to liberalize Turkey and achieve many things we believed in. In his early years, Menderes was successful and Turkey was frequently cited in American publications as a glowing example of a country that had graduated from a dictatorship to a democracy.

But as the 50s wore on, the Turks got into tremendous difficulties, particularly in the economic sphere. Menderes himself became increasingly autocratic. Inonu and his Party, really the party of the Turkish elite, was in adamant opposition to Menderes. They sabotaged the government in many ways; they were strong among bureaucrats and army officers. Menderes reacted repressively; the situation went downhill. Just before I arrived in Turkey, a coup took place May 27, 1960.

So when I arrived in Turkey, a military junta had just taken over. Inonu and his party had not been involved, at least not directly. The junta stayed in power for about 18 months, until it could arrange elections. Menderes was tried and hung along with two others, including Zorlu, the Foreign Minister. There was wide spread feeling in Turkey, including

among the military officers themselves, that there should be elections. Although some may have had reservations about elections, the military saw their job as leading Turkey back down the democratic path.

When the elections came in 1961, it was generally expected that Inonu and his Party would win. He didn't. He did manage to obtain a plurality of the votes, but he had to form alliances in the Parliament with three smaller parties. One was an old party; the other two were new and had been established to compete for the old Democratic Party votes. That had to be done in veiled ways because it was illegal to criticize the coup or to invoke Menderes' name. I remember one very skillful politician whom I got to know well. He had strange green eyes. He would stand up before crowds and say: “Look into my eyes and you will know who I support”. Everybody knew he was referring to Menderes and would cheer wildly. One of the new parties was called the Justice Party. Without saying so, everyone understood that that Party stood for “justice” for Menderes and the old Democratic Party. That eventually became the largest party in Turkey and took over the government. The roots of the Justice Party were in the Aegean region. Menderes was from Aydin, which was the next province south of Ismir. The Justice Party had tremendous strength in that region, among peasants, businessmen, land-owners. This was significant for me personally because having spent two years in Ismir, traveling around the Aegean (for which I had plenty of time since I was not overburdened by official duties), practicing my Turkish, drinking a lot of tea in small Turkish towns, I had an opportunity to observe the birth of the Justice Party and became acquainted with a number of its early leaders.

I transferred to the Political Section at the Embassy in Ankara in September 1962. Ankara was very different from the Aegean region. It had been the center of the Republican Party. Inonu was widely admired. There were a number of bright, impressive, younger members of the RPP (Inonu's Party). Some spoke English, some spoke French. The Embassy people knew them. So I arrived in Ankara, a young officer in my early '30s and was assigned to report on internal political affairs. I discovered that my new colleagues were enamored of the RPP. They saw Menderes and his successors in a very bad light

because they had been in Ankara when the coup took place. Many of the embassy's staff, having witnessed the events and failures of the last year of Menderes were sympathetic to the objectives of the coup. With the exception of the Ambassador, the senior officers in the Embassy had lost respect for Menderes and his government. This legacy continued through the coup and the subsequent elections. I arrived with a different view, since I saw the Menderes' natural successors as respectable people; at least, that is the way they were being viewed by the Turks in the Aegean area. They may not have been as sophisticated as the RPP crowd and you had to have known Turkish to know them since few spoke other languages. I thought that in the competition for Menderes' mantle and votes, the Justice Party would win. I also thought that once they had achieved their electoral victory, they would take over the government, unless the military interfered once again. The Justice Party had leadership problems. In order to protect itself from the military, the Justice Party had found a retired Lieutenant General as a figure head. He was a nice man, but certainly not an influence. The real power belonged to a younger group of politicians, some of whom were related to members of the former Menderes government. They were split between the so-called “revanchists” and the moderates. The “revanchists” were in a minority, but were very vocal. They wanted to push to the extreme some kind of redress of what they considered the crimes perpetrated against Menderes. The moderates were inclined to let bygones be bygones because they understood that they would have to learn to cooperate with their opposition; they wanted to make it clear immediately that there would be no revenge, no “witch hunts” if they came to power. The moderates got the upper hand, which was important both internally and for Turkey's relations with other countries. I observed all these events in 1963. I was in a crowded movie theater in Ankara where the Justice Party met for three days. The issue was who would become the new President of the Party because the old general had passed away. The debate was heated and victory was not clear until the very end. The hall stank of tobacco and I sat in the balcony for those three long days with a couple of other diplomatic observers—most of the diplomatic corps didn't bother to attend. Some newsmen covered the event; we all had a great time watching this assemblage. In the end, in a very dramatic election,

Suleyman Demirel won. He has served as Turkey's Prime Minister seven times since then. I knew Demirel; I had met and been in his office many times and had become quite friendly with him. Demirel was eager to have a contact in the American Embassy; none of the senior officers knew him, so that I, although only a Second Secretary, became the contact. I returned to the Embassy after my visit to Demirel to write up our first contact and predicted he would become Prime Minister. Ambassador Raymond Hare, a senior career Foreign Service officer, was good about letting junior officers write up their experiences in messages to the Department. He would let Second Secretaries report what they wanted as long as it wasn't too stupid. The DCM would review the reports and delete the more outrageous commentaries, but essentially we were free to write reports. Hare would draft a beautifully crafted telegram from time to time which would set all events in a context, correcting whatever impressions the staff reports may have left on Washington. Hare was a good Ambassador, although quite conservative. By today's standards, he undoubtedly would be considered “old fashioned”. But he was good and an exquisite writer of the “old school”, which I still admire. His messages were models of both subtleties and clarity. So I was permitted to report my contacts and views, but the Embassy was careful, on another level, to put my views in what it considered a proper framework, so that my enthusiasm for Demirel would not overwhelm the existing consensus that Inonu would turn out to be the victor. Inonu was the “grand old man”; people admired him and I shared that with others. But I did think that he had peaked, that his Party would not win and that it would not retain control.

The Justice Party grew because it had become recognized widely throughout Turkey that it was the lineal descendent of the Popular Democrat Party and of Menderes. A lot of the smaller parties, who had been very cautious, joined the Justice Party, enlarging its representation in Parliament. Demirel, although not even a member of the Parliament, became a major political figure. He had come to the US on an Eisenhower fellowship many years earlier. He was an engineer by profession—he built dams in the Menderes administration. When I first met him, Demirel was in his late '30s—young by Turkish

standards. He was called Suleyman Morrison by his detractors, which was a reference to the fact that he had once been a consultant to the Morrison-Knudsen Company.

Within the Embassy, some of the younger officers agreed with my assessments, the older officers didn't. It was a classic situation. We had a wonderful Military Attach#, who spoke Turkish, whom I liked very much. He tolerated me, but I remember him shaking his finger at me and telling me: “Don't sell your Inonu stock!”. There was no bitterness among the staff, but there certainly were sharp disagreements. But we had no limits on our reporting, as has occurred in other Embassies, such as Tehran, which was much to Raymond Hare's credit. He did periodically “straighten it out” by making sure that his views were understood in Washington, but he never repressed his officers' reporting. I did feel some inhibitions within the Political Section because the Counselor was a cautious and not too competent officer; he was worried about his staff going off in their forecasts. The DCM, Bob Barnes, was very competent and did not seem disturbed by reports which were somewhat out of the “mainstream”. I confess that I was guilty of “end-runs”. I ended up working not through the Political Counselor, but with his boss, the DCM, who had been the former Political Counselor. He actually protected me; the Political Counselor wrote negative reports on my work; they weren't outrageous, but certainly not enthusiastic. Barnes, then as reviewing officer, would repair any damage done by the Political Counselor. The processes frustrated and worried me. The Political Counselor would never believe my reporting. He just didn't believe it because his antenna always went up and never down; he sensed that the Ambassador's view was different than mine and therefore was not about to run those rocky shoals. In any case, those efficiency ratings didn't hurt my career, but to lack support from your supervisor is inhibiting. The early '60s were a time when we could have used a different kind of Political Counselor; we were just lucky that the DCM had previously been the Political Counselor and therefore took a great interest in the work of the Section. If the DCM had come to Ankara from outside, then I could have been in serious trouble.

First, there were local elections which suddenly took the form of a national referendum. There were general predictions that the RPP would increase its strength. I was free to travel, which I did. It became my view and I so reported, that instead the local elections would be a landslide in favor of Demirel and the Justice Party. It happened often that the Political Counselor would approve my reports, but would delete my conclusions. He would say: “Let the facts speak for themselves”. Of course, that really left the reader up in the air; facts had to be interpreted. I got around these reporting restrictions by writing up verbatim conversations which no one edited and then I distributed them as widely as I could. In any case, I felt after that the Justice Party would triumph by a wide margin which would have Parliamentary consequences. And indeed that is what happened. Everybody professed great amazement, including the Turkish press which was not on the Justice Party's side. In fact, the trend was evident to anyone who wanted to look in the countryside.

Inonu resigned and I was there the day that happened. I was almost the only diplomat in the Parliament who observed this major event. The debate leading up to the resignation was heated; Inonu was a small, but a very stern and angry man. But in fact he had lost his majority. After the adjournment, I went down and stood with the newsmen at the Parliament's exit. Inonu stomped out. In those days there were no security guards so that we could all mill around watching the proceedings from close up. As he left, Inonu said that he would be back. I returned to the Embassy and wrote a report calling the resignation the end of an era. That is when the American military attach# made his comment about Inonu. In fact, Inonu never came back and Demirel became Prime Minister.

Q: Did you find that your observations, when proved correct, enhanced your position in the Embassy?

DILLON: I suddenly became a key person in the Embassy, rather then the obscure junior member of the Political Section. My situation was greatly enhanced. During my last year in Ankara, we got a new Political Counselor, Chris Van Hollen, who was a terrific officer. He was a good professional. My relations with him were excellent from the beginning.

Interestingly enough, he did far more editing of my reports than his predecessor, but he really improved them. Chris had a very good eye for organization and would almost invariably suggest that I rearrange my paragraphs and lines so that my views could be better understood. I gladly did that. We also in that last year had a new Ambassador—Pete Hart—and a new DCM—Ed Martin. Both were good officers—smart, professional.

It was a lot of fun. In those days, we still had the “despatch” which went by pouch, enabling the reporting officer to take as much space as he or she wanted. So most of them were rather long. The daily reports went by telegram, which in the early '60s were far fewer than today and much shorter. There were restriction on the use and length of telegrams, which made it different than the despatch. The latter was typically 3 or 4 pages; sometimes just one, sometimes twenty. I regret that we gave up the despatches. In the Political Section, in dividing the work, each officer had two responsibilities: one was a subject—in my case it was internal politics as I mentioned earlier—which required me to write a brief telegram every day because Washington was very interested during this period on what was going on in Turkey. Each officer also had responsibility for major subjects, which would lend themselves periodically to a full dissertation and interpretation of events which we would send in as despatches. I wrote on a number of subjects—it was hard work, but fun. I wrote an important despatch on “Whither the Justice Party” which gave me an opportunity in five or six pages to lay out the history of the Justice Party, how and why it developed and where I thought it was going. Even though a despatch had to be approved by a senior officer and the Ambassador's name at the end as it did on all communications from an Embassy, the drafter's name appeared usually on the front page. It was widely understood by all readers that this was essentially the work of the drafting officer, despite the fact that some—or in some cases, substantial—editing had been done by superior officers. Of course, in many cases, the editing improved the despatch, but a reader of a despatch always looked for the drafter's name and the system judged an officer to a certain extent by the quality of those despatches. In my case, Van Hollen used to send back my draft with a lot of editorial comments; he did not criticize the content, but the presentation and

organization. The despatch on the Justice Party gave me an opportunity to prognosticate on the future of the Party and Turkish domestic politics. I didn't write about external affairs; Charlie Tanguy wrote about Cyprus for example. But I found that making that analysis was very satisfying; my sense is that we do far less of such analysis today.

The Political Section in Ankara was a large one. We must have had six or seven officers in it. One followed CENTO affairs, one Cyprus as I mentioned; everyone had his specialty. There were two of us who specialized in internal affairs, which I think was the most important work of the Section. One of the two or three most satisfying experiences that I ever had was when we returned to the US on leave to be able to talk to some INR people about Turkey. Some official, whom I did not know, pulled out my despatch on the Justice Party and said: “There is the Bible”. That was very rewarding!

Embassies still analyze situations in long telegrams and I occasionally see them, but the despatch was a different medium. The very fact that it was not a telegram gave it an certain aura. The problem with despatches was that the very busy policy maker at the top never had time to read them; he would never even see them. The desk officers could read them carefully and summarize them for their superiors. INR people would read them; often staff of other agencies would see them. INR loved them because they contained a lot of facts and analysis. Ultimately, because of the success of the “Whither the Justice Party”, I wrote one on every Turkish political party to make up a series of about six different papers. They all of course were not perfect and not every prediction came true, but I had the opportunity, which I really enjoyed, to reflect on the Turkish political scene, which was interesting. I had the opportunity to lay out the political map in some perspective. I enjoyed writing that series so much that I always looked forward to doing more of the same in other assignments, but in fact, after I left Turkey in 1966, I never wrote anything like that again.

Q: What are your views on an Embassy's capability to cover the thoughts and aspiration of a foreign military institution?

DILLON: This was the subject of a lot of discussion among the Embassy staff. Obviously, the military was a vital element of Turkish society and their views mattered greatly. Our Attach#s and political officers were always trying to probe. We would talk to our JUSMAAT —the military assistance group—who were very reluctant to discuss the state of mind of their Turkish counterparts. They viewed their conversations with the Turks as confidential and felt that any appearance of “spying” would be damaging to their relationships and their program. So we had to cultivate some of the JUSMAAT people the same way you would cultivate a foreign official in order to gain their confidence.

But penetration of the Turkish military was very difficult. They were professional, well disciplined, somewhat secretive, although probably no more than any other military establishment. It was difficult to know what they were thinking. In a general sense, we knew they were pro-Inonu and then later anti-Justice and anti-Demirel. Of course, the important question was whether they had any coups in mind and whether there were any leftist or rightist sentiments among the military. I think we understood them fairly well; rumors of coup plotting came to us as quickly as they went anywhere.

We did have two coup attempts during this period; one occurred just before I got to Ankara. This was led by the Commandant of the Military Academy. It turned into a stand off and he and the other members of the uprising were pardoned and went on with their military career as if nothing had happened.

After I had been in Ankara for about a year, there were constant rumors of coups. I lived outside the center of Ankara. One midnight, I got a call from a friend who told me that there were tanks in the streets. I put on my clothes and went to see. At key points around town, tanks had been stationed, manned not by regular troops but by cadets, which was a sure sign that another coup was taking place. It was a very interesting night! The government did not trust its junior officers, so that, although it mobilized the Army to oppose the coup, the troops were led by very senior officers and senior NCOs. Most of the company commanders and platoon leaders were told to stay away because the

senior officers felt that their junior commanders might be reluctant to fire on the cadets. Everybody loved the cadets; they were the heroes. It was a great prestige to be a cadet at the Turkish Military Academy.

I went to the various checkpoints where I was met by very nervous cadets. They were very nice and polite as they had been taught, but also very naive. When they stopped me, I would tell them that I was a member of the American Embassy and that I was collecting information for the Ambassador who would certainly wish to know what was going on. I “gilded the lily” somewhat by adding that if I didn't find out what was going on, I could lose my job. So they would tell me although none of them would let me pass their checkpoints. In a little while, a few other foreign observers began to gather. We went to the place where the Turkish army was preparing to attack the checkpoints; it was there that I realized there were no junior officers at platoon and company level. In the Turkish military, an enlisted man could not become an officer. If you were a draftee, you could aspire to becoming a corporal—they wore red stripes—, but never beyond that. There were some professional NCOs who would serve for 10-12 years; they wore yellow stripes. Then there were the officers. Each of these groups were highly compartmentalized. There was no upward mobility. So I saw no “yellow stripers”, but several colonels and generals; the “red striped” corporals were in charge of the platoons and companies. It made me wonder how the Army would perform. I followed them and found that they performed admirably. The cadets were in danger of being overwhelmed and they withdrew back into the city, where they occupied a few strong points. There was some firing, but not a lot of casualties. The Army was not anxious to kill any cadets; there were a few soldiers killed.

I followed the troops that went to the Ministry of Agriculture which was right in the center of Ankara—a great big building with thick walls. A group of cadets had taken refuge inside. The corporals handled their responsibilities very professionally. They deployed their troops in a text-book manner around the Ministry, periodically they would advance on the building, set up a firing point and wait. Slowly, but surely, they closed on the Ministry. When the final assault came, I just walked in behind them. There was some shooting; all

of a sudden the cadets ran out of some rear doors and disbursed. That was the only close unit action that I watched; it was interesting and gave me something to write. That shows you how much I loved reporting.

Q: That is obvious. A more seasoned diplomat might have said that following troops is beyond the diplomatic scope. But I am sure it was fun.

DILLON: It sure was. The coup was suppressed and the cadets were expelled. The officers who led the uprising were tried. That was an interesting process. I attended the trials which dragged on interminably. Most of the Embassy wondered why anybody would want to sit at the trials day after day. My Turkish was pretty good, but the trial was hard to follow. The exchanges were emotional and everybody spoke rapidly. My vocabulary failed me from time to time. But in the course of the trial, I learned more history of the Turkish Republic than I knew, on such matters as the philosophy of the professional officers' corps, which was used by both the prosecution and the defense for their purposes. It was a terrific educational experience for someone interested in Turkish history and mentality. In the end, the leaders were hung including the very charismatic leader.

At the same time, I spent a lot of time at the Parliament so that I was not in the office very much. I have always believed that there was an intrinsic value just being in a location. Eventually, if you keep visiting it long enough, you become part of it. People begin to neglect you and you are not pointed out as a member of the American Embassy. So I became known as “the guy who is there all the time” both at the trials and the Parliament. I would be invited to join people at tea. In every Turkish building, there is always a tea parlor where you can go and have a cup. In the Parliament, much of the work was done in the big Tea Room which was just off the floor. You couldn't enter without an invitation from a member. I would stand around the entrance looking forlorn and inevitably some kind M.P. would invite me to join him for a cup of tea. That enabled me to absorb the atmosphere and periodically, I could talk to other members who congregated there. It was fun!

Q: You mentioned earlier the Cuban missile crisis and the withdrawal of missiles from Turkish bases that we agree to. What was the Turkish reaction to this "deal"?

DILLON: Very negative. The Turkish perception was that they had been betrayed. It was not as much an issue of the missiles, but rather that we had dealt with the Soviets unilaterally on matters of concern to them. We never admitted to the Turks that we had negotiated with the USSR. I think we did, although I have no direct evidence. But the Turkish perception was certainly one of betrayal. It was true that many of the Turks didn't like having the missiles on their territory, but that didn't minimize their outrage at the withdrawal—a familiar situation. They were upset, that six months after putting them in place, we would withdraw the missiles without real consultation. I am sure that the record will reflect some consultations, but the US had reached its decision before it talked to Turkey. In answer to the question of "Why?", the best answer we had was that the missiles were then obsolescent. Not only did argument raise the question of how they became obsolescent so quickly, but the Turks also reminded us that they were better than the nothing which was to be the outcome from the withdrawal. Our arguments were not credible.

This missile crisis was just one event that shook Turkish confidence in the US. A little bit later, there was a "Johnson letter" to Inonu which warned the Turks that if they got into difficulties over Cyprus—e.g. Soviet intervention, which I didn't think was a real possibility although others did—none of the NATO arrangements would apply. NATO was a defensive alliance; we wanted to make sure that the Turks understood that if they took any offensive action—on Cyprus, in this case—the NATO agreements would not be applicable, regardless of justification. So these two major events—the missile removal and the "Johnson letter" plus some more minor occurrences such as Turkish disappointment with the level and effectiveness of our assistance programs—created an atmosphere of mistrust and, as I said in the case of the missiles, actual betrayal. There was a tendency to believe that an alliance was an alliance and that the United States, being the leader

of such an alliance, had a special commitment to both the spirit and the letter of the agreements. The Turks also felt that the alliance was a two-way street, which they had marched down by sending troops to Korea. For political reasons, we greatly exaggerated the accomplishments of those troops; they were not bad, but they certainly were not the super-humans that we painted them to be. We took every opportunity to overstate their accomplishments which the average Turks of course fully believed. So when the missiles were removed, the outrage was enormous. Old Korean veterans protested in front of the Embassy by throwing their medals in the doorway. I think every Turk who served in the front lines in Korea must have received a bronze star because we certainly collected a bushel full of them during the demonstrations. Many of my colleagues and I felt that we could have handled the issue better than we did. We didn't have to be so abrupt about the missile withdrawals. The “Johnson letter” which I understand was written by Secretary Rusk personally could have been more felicitously phrased. On the other hand, it was necessary to tell the Turks that although we were allies, there were limits beyond which we could not support them. The Turks were somewhat unrealistic about US support and it was very important that Inonu and his advisers understand that they did not have a free hand to muddy the waters in the Eastern Mediterranean. In essence we were right in delivering the message; we could have been better in phrasing it. As far as the missiles were concerned, I am sorry that they were ever put there in the first place.

Q: During the period we are discussing, how did we view the Soviet threat to Turkey and the latter's possible responses?

DILLON: These issues were constant preoccupations of ours. There had been a direct Soviet threat against Turkey in the late '40s. The Soviets did have their eyes on the Strait of Bosporus. The Soviets did attempt to get an agreement on the use of the Straits including free passage. Their objective was of course full control. Despite the passage of years, these Soviet actions were still very much in the Turkish mind. Most Turks saw the Soviets as very threatening. The Americans saw the Straits as very strategic real estate which had by all means to be kept out of Soviet hands. Our military assistance and Turkish

military strategy centered on that objective. One consequence of that policy was the development of a Turkish armored force, which was semi-modern for the times. This force was to be based in Thrace which was great tank country. The assumption was that the Russians would strike Turkey through Bulgaria into Thrace. The Turkish First Army, which was always the best equipped and supplied, had the responsibility of stopping the Soviets. The Turkish Third Army, which was the other combat ready large unit, was stationed in the East in very rugged terrain, inimicable to the use of large tank forces. That area of Turkey was viewed as another invasion route, but the two potential battlefields were very dissimilar. We had JUSMAAT officers located in both areas near Turkish borders. They lived under fairly spartan conditions and worked with the Turks on use of American equipment.

In any case, we viewed the Soviets as a potential military threat to Turkey. We also saw an internal threat from a small Turkish Communist movement. George Harris wrote a book about that. Despite suppression, the communist doctrines remained attractive to a small group of Turkish intellectuals. It is very easy now, many years later, to look back and see that the threat was greatly exaggerated. But at the time, without the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, there was concern. Many discussions were held: was Islam a barrier to Soviet expansion? Was the innate conservatism of the Turkish peasant a barrier? It was certainly true that the peasant conservatism was a barrier to change of any kind. Whether Islam was a barrier was debatable although I believe it probably was.

The domestic left movement was very Turkey oriented and contained some very extreme points of view. These were people who later became deeply involved in terrorism in Turkey. They were not tools of the Soviets; they were not particularly responsive to the Soviets. They were interested in the Soviets. Like leftist and revolutionary movements elsewhere, they had appropriated the vocabulary, but they were fundamentally Turkish—in some cases, very dangerous, but first and foremost Turkish. We worried about them. The Turks worried about them. They did try to suppress these movements; it was illegal to be a communist. “Socialism” was a very suspicious word. Only by the late '60s, could a

Turk admit to being a socialist without being immediately suspected as a communist and jailed or otherwise ostracized.It should be noted that all this phobia was overcome later, although policy makers always saw Turkey on the front lines against the Soviets and they did see Turkey as endangered. Turkey was viewed as a barrier against Soviet free access to the Mediterranean. Greece and Turkey were viewed as one in the sense that although Turkey may have been the key element because of its location, the cooperation between the two in defense of the eastern flank of NATO was vital and the strength much greater than if each county worked alone. That is one of the reasons why we wanted bases in both countries and were so intent on somehow obtaining Greek-Turkish cooperation. This was of course a very frustrating strategic objective, something like mixing oil and water. I think the hatreds were less virulent on the Turkish side because their historical perspectives were different than the Greek ones. The Turks were less obsessed with the Greeks than vice versa. On the other hand, the ideal of real cooperation between the two seemed unachievable. I don't think any Turks believed it was possible and viewed us as obsessed by this silly idea and therefore paid lip service to the concept, but they didn't break their backs in trying to achieve this cooperation. It is easy now to say that we were over-obsessed, but when you analyze our position within the atmosphere of those days, it is far more understandable. Some people today find it hard to understand what all the fuss was in Europe in '50s and '60s, but they fail to recognize the impact of such events as the Czech coup of 1968 and the Hungarian revolution and repression of 1956. One could argue that the Soviet block was never as tightly woven together as we believed and that it was in fact weaker than the West gave it credit. I always had some doubts about the Warsaw pact strength, but I certainly and most others did not view it as fragile as it subsequently turned out to be. There is a tendency today to minimize the dangers as perceived by the West. The fact was that a threat was perceived; it did not go away. In retrospect, after Stalin's death in the Spring of 1953, followed by the Korean cease fire a few weeks later, it is possible that from then on the threat was different, but it was perceptible at the time. It took some years to see the difference. After Khrushchev came to power we had some signals from the Soviets that their policies had changed.

Khrushchev was a different leader and an important figure in the post-World War II period. The Russians maintained massive armed forces on the Turkish borders. They had overwhelming armored superiority. The Soviet missions abroad were very aggressive. In Ankara, for example, they had a huge mission, larger than ours. It was staffed with lots of Turkish speakers—large number of Azerbaijanis—, a big KGB contingent. They were very active making extensive attempts to influence the press and leftist parties. I used to see the Soviets occasionally, including an officer we believed to be the KGB chief, although we could never be certain. He would show up in some of the places which I frequented. His Turkish was very good. He would delight in joining me when I was speaking with some Turks, spouting his rapid, fluent Turkish non-stop trying to convey the impression that he spoke better Turkish than I did, which was the fact. I held my own and wasn't disturbed by these interruptions. But the Soviets were aggressive in those days and it was many years before their behavior was modified. When I returned to Turkey in the late '70s, their behavior had modified considerably, but in the period of 1960-66, even though there were changes in Moscow and in Soviet Union in general, their representatives in Turkey were very aggressive.

Q: After the completion of your assignment in Ankara in 1966, you came back to Washington to an assignment in the Office of Personnel. What was your assignment in that Office and how did the whole Office perform?

DILLON: When I arrived in PER, it had recently started a career development program. I believe I was a Career Management Officer. My boss was Walker Givan and his superior was Bob Houghton. I worked with both of them. I was the advisor for FSO-5 Political Officers and I was also responsible for training assignments for all officers except economic ones. The two functions worked well together because in those days FSO-5 was the level from which long-term training assignments were drawn. FSO-5 was the beginning of the mid-career era. The people I counseled would, normally, have had one tour as a

political officer; frequently, they were officers who had been in non-political assignments and were interested in becoming political officers.

I had several tasks, depending on the officers being counseled. Some came in to review their personnel files; we had authorization to retrieve those files and to let people look at them. We would then discuss the files with the officers. Part of the job was to help an officer to interpret his or her file. We of course had no particular training in this kind of counseling; with experience, one was able to evaluate the content of a file. I did come to understand that in isolation, one file did not have much meaning. That was one of the reasons why the Department permitted officers to review their files; you couldn't tell much from reading one file. You had to compare one file with others in the same category; without that, an officer could not possibly know what his or her prospects were. Occasionally, there was material in a file that would be very damaging, but in general, officers could not understand what was being said about them because then, at least, there was a veiled language, a reading “between the lines” that was necessary to fully appreciate how the officer was being evaluated. Rating officers used the old technique of damning people with faint praise and other similar well known approaches.

Q: There was also a period during which there were in effect two personnel files: one which an officer could review at a post and another one, which was confidential and not available to the officer until he reached PER. That was quite a shocker.

DILLON: For a personnel officer, the confidential file was more useful because it tended to be franker. The use of two files did raise questions about fairness and frankness and I think it was correct to eliminate the confidential file. My assignment as a counselor fitted well with my responsibilities for training assignments. For example, I was in a good position to recommend certain officers for language training. One of my proud boasts was that my first year in Career Development was the first year that all language training positions were filled. That includes training in Burmese and other such languages which had often remained unfilled for lack of interest. I would listen to people complain about

their careers and their assignments; then I would say that I could guarantee a very interesting assignment if the officer would take a year to study Swahili or Burmese or some other difficult language. As a practical matter, training assignments did lead to good substantive assignments, more often in political work, but also in the economic area. These assignments tended to be very interesting. Many of these assignments worked out very well for the Department and the officer. The hard language assignment was a way for an officer to forge ahead; that didn't work out all the time, but quite often. Some officers got fresh starts that way and moved on to rewarding careers.

The worst part of the job was dealing with people who were being “selected out” or had other serious problems. When the Promotion Panels met, they ranked all officers. The people at the top were eligible for promotions; the ones on the bottom were subject to “selection out”. In those days, “selection out” was a process used far more often than today and more often than people realized. There were two ways to be selected-out: a) a Panel could recommend such action based on an officer's personnel file—I never experienced such a case although I am sure that it did occasionally occur; b) if an officer fell in the lowest ten percent of his or her class and if that happened three times while in the same class, the officer was “selected out” or if an officer fell in the lowest five percent one year and in the lowest ten in an another year, that was also cause for “selection out”. If an officer was placed in the lowest five percent, the Panel had to write a statement justifying its decision, but an officer could be placed in the lowest ten percent without written justification. The most difficult and saddest cases that I had to handle were those officers who had been in the lowest ten percent for three years. There was no special documentation that I could refer to explain the low ranking; I just had to review the file with the officer and try to pick out those remarks and observations that may have led the Panel to reach its conclusions. Frequently, the files of the officers in the lowest ten percent did not look bad. So how did the individual find himself or herself in that predicament? Sometimes the file did indicate a problem, but too often it did not. Dealing with the people was heart rending. Officers were devastated because their own peers had judged them so

poorly. Their self-esteem was shattered and they found it very difficult to deal with findings of the Panel. So the counselor had to try to be both realistic, in terms of accepting the facts, and sympathetic. My belief, based on a large number of people I talked to during my assignment, is that the people who were best off were the ones who figuratively kicked my door open, threw something at me and said to me: “Damn the Foreign Service! take the job and shove it”. Those people still had self-esteem. The worst case of course was the nice guy who would slink in, unbelieving of what had happened, but accepting the Panel's judgement.

There is very little that is helpful that you can say to people under these circumstances. I would try to explain that the Panel had reached a judgment based on a file, which might describe an officer to some degree, but could not possibly cover all of a person's dimensions. The officer and the file were two entirely different things. I tried to point out that for whatever reason, the Panel had listed the officer in the lowest ten percent, but that in the final analysis, the officer was a human being and a special and unique person at that. But it probably sounded hollow. Who was I to reach these conclusions? But I tried to put the Panel's decisions in some perspective.

Q: Today there is of course a lot of stress on sensitivity. More than I suspect was true in the late '60s. Was your attitude self-generated or did you receive any counseling or training before you saw the officers who were to be “selected out”?

DILLON: All self-generated. No one tried to help out the poor counselors. Somebody said I was “fairly” sympathetic—not even “very” sympathetic. Therefore, I was chosen to handle “selection out” cases. In truth, no one wanted to handle those cases, including myself. But I did learn a lot. I ended up feeling sorry for people and skeptical about the system. I was especially concerned about the “lowest ten percent three times” rule.

Q: You and I served in PER at about the same time. I was not impressed by the passivity that many Foreign Service officers showed in the assignment process. They went where

they were told without raising a question, leaving their long-range career development to the fates. Very few thought through their assignments in terms of a long range objective. I presume that is one of reasons why so many did not really take issue with the Panel's findings. Did you find many people who used the system to get ahead?

DILLON: Let me answer that indirectly. We were supposed to talk to people about career planning. We developed a little form that we used and we used to discuss all the possible assignments that might lead to a successful career. My observation about people who moved ahead was that they didn't need such counseling. I used to meet younger officers with less experience than I had who somehow always knew how to use the system and where their attention should be focused. They never made a misstep. They knew how to manage their careers; they knew how to get the assignments they wanted and which would be beneficial to their careers. Many others couldn't really be helped by Career Management. Some of my “clients” were very passive; some would brag that they had never refused an assignment. That was an easy answer; I never refused an assignment either. The trick of course was to make sure that the wanted assignment would be offered by working on the system long before it focused on your next assignment. That way you are not offered an assignment that you want to refuse. You don't wait for Personnel to come up with an assignment; you move to seek the right job long before Personnel gets around to the issue.

There was probably a large minority of people who were far too passive about the assignment system. It was a mistake on their part.

Q: It was a mistake on their part. They expected good things to happen and it didn't necessarily happen. Tell me what the situation was during your tour in Personnel as far as the age-old debate of Regional Bureaus vs. Personnel.

DILLON: At the time, we had Assignment Panels which decided what an employee's next assignment would be. The Panel consisted of representatives of Personnel, such as

myself, and the Regional Bureaus. In many cases, there were useful tensions between the two sides, but my conclusion was that a strong centralized personnel system was absolutely necessary. And this was despite the fact that I was a strong supporter of regional bureaus. I felt that if assignments were left primarily to the mercies of the regional bureaus, they would be very narrowly focused; there would be little imagination, little cross-fertilization. It seemed to me that Ambassadors and DCMs, with rare exceptions, wanted always to have someone assigned to a particular job who already had had ten years of experience in the same or similar assignment. That was not realistic nor did it make much sense from the point of view of either the employee or the Service. But that was the typical attitude; Ambassadors and DCMs demanded those kinds of assignments. But for equity and imaginative cross-fertilization, assignments had to be made by a centralized assignment authority where people worried more about the individual or the overall interests of the Service than they did about the desires of an Ambassador or a DCM. That is where most of the tensions arose. I did feel uncomfortable about the occasional necessity of assigning an officer to a position which he or she could not fill adequately. Those were known as the “turkey” assignments. These were mostly people for whom appropriate assignments could not be found. Every six months or so, panels would have to meet on about fifteen or so employees, because they were real assignment problems. It was never very many, but the only solution was to divide them up among regional and functional bureaus and force those bureaus to find positions for these employees. It used to be very aggravating when occasionally you would find the name of one of these “turkeys” on the promotion list. We used to wonder how such things could happen. It left us shaking our heads.

I learned a lot in Personnel. I learned how the system worked. I learned to be more aggressive about looking out for myself, hopefully not in an obnoxious way, but I did become realistically assertive about my future assignments. I recognized that the best judge of a good career development program is the employee himself or herself. Occasionally, you run into major egos in the Foreign Service in people who have

unrealistic and grandiose ideas of their worth, but there weren't too many of those. Also occasionally you run into the “Europe only” mentality; that is people who are wedded forever to one geographic area of the world and who refuse to believe that out-of-area experience might be useful both to them and to the Service.

Q: People tend to forget that Personnel in the Department of State is different than that in other agencies. In other governmental units, Personnel is staffed by professional bureaucrats, whereas in State personnel positions are frequently occupied by people such as yourself who spend a couple of years in that Office and then move on to the highest level of the Service such as Ambassadors. An assignment to Personnel is an opportunity both to help the system and to help oneself by teaching the officer how to use the system.

DILLON: I agree with you. I recommend that system and I have always encouraged officers to accept assignments in Personnel. It is not true that you can sit in Personnel and pick out your next assignment, but you do learn with far greater realism how the system works and what assignments are available. In fact, I felt a lot better about the Service after my tour in Personnel. It was the first time I felt like an insider, although I am not sure that I ever became one. For one thing, I saw that there was a reasonable amount of fairness in the system. The widely accepted view that the system contained a lot of “favoritism” just simply wasn't true. Assignments were usually openly decided. There were occasional exceptions, but they were rare. I thought the system as a whole was a fairly good one. I thought highly of my colleagues in Personnel; they tried very hard and were exceedingly devoted to the concept of fairness. The tensions with the regional bureaus were often centered on this question of fairness and it was the Personnel people who were most intent on assuring that employees were treated fairly.

Q: What are your recollections about the Personnel system's views of women and minorities?

DILLON: The emphasis on these two issues was not as explicit as it became later. I think that people were already conscious at the time of the need to be fair to the minorities in the Foreign Service. We were not talking about a lot of people in those days. Surely there must have been an occasion when a minority was unfairly treated, but I don't recall any specific instances. I do remember prejudices against women. It stemmed from the geographic bureaus in the main. It wasn't that the bureau representatives were a bunch of bigots, but they did raise questions about whether women could operate in traditional societies, such as the Arab world, the Mediterranean or in African countries. I thought that there were times when Personnel should have been more insistent on making some assignments. You must remember however that this was the height of a system that permitted Ambassadors and DCMs to have wide latitude on personnel assignments. If they judged that “a woman could not operate successfully in Country X” it was more likely to be accepted by the system than later on when such judgements were not accepted and even later on, when they were seldom sought. I must say that the issue of women's assignability did not rise often in those days, presumably because women were still a fairly small minority of the Service. I can remember being personally involved on a couple of occasions on a question of a woman's assignment, but not in a debate about the assignment of a minority officer. The Service has come a long way on both issues with its sensitivity to the rights of women and minorities having risen exponentially. I have friends in the Service who will argue that the system now militates against white male officers, but I am not sure that I would agree with that conclusion.

Q: Then in 1968, after a year to Personnel, you volunteered to go to Vietnam.

DILLON: We were assigning so many officers to Vietnam during this period, that I felt very guilty and I decided to volunteer for service in that area. I was released by Personnel and about to go off to French training in preparation for an assignment to Vietnam when I became very ill. I had my gall bladder removed; I was on sick leave for three months thereby losing my clearance for an overseas assignment. So Personnel took me back and

put me to work on economic officers' assignments. I worked with Mellencamp and Larry Williamson. Larry is now one of the senior officers in Personnel.

When that year came to an end, I wanted to be assigned overseas. I had decided that I should try to go to Latin America and somehow got assigned as Chief of the Political Section at our Embassy in Honduras. Joe Jova was the ambassador; he interviewed me before the assignment was made. One day, shortly before my departure, I was walking down a hall in the Department when I ran into Charlie Bray, who was at the time working for Chip Bohlen, the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs and the “grand old man” of the Foreign Service. Charlie stopped me and said that he had a great job for me. It turned out that Charlie was talking about his own job because he was leaving and Bohlen needed another special assistant. Charlie was taking a year off to do some work with the American Foreign Service Association.

I told Charlie that it sounded intriguing, but that I was on my way to Honduras. He assured me that that would be no problem because the system—and the officer—should respond to a request by a senior officer, especially a Bohlen. So he set up an interview with Bohlen, after which Bohlen announced that I would be his next special assistant. Charlie had put the proposition to me in very flattering terms. He assured me that he had considered every officer in the Service and had come to the conclusion that there was only one who could fill the job and that of course was me. What in fact had happened was that Bray had talked to Bohlen to tell him about his own plans to leave and Bohlen said “OKAY” subject to finding a suitable replacement. I think I was probably the first person that Bray ran into after his conservation with Bohlen.

So I didn't go to Honduras, but went to work for Bohlen. I never did get back to Latin America. But my tour with Bohlen was very instructive. I don't know that I contributed a lot, but I certainly got an education. Many of the Department's problems would come to Bohlen; he was very relaxed about dealing with them. Indeed some people criticized him for being too relaxed; I don't know that I would necessarily agree with that judgement. He

didn't want a lot of staff support. I would shuffle a few papers for him, run errands, listen to his stories occasionally. Every once in a while he would assign me a little research project, but I can't say that the assignment was particularly stressful. The hours were very long; I had to get in early and leave late. The best part of the day was after six p.m. when Chip Bohlen would put his feet on his desk and tell stories. They were always interesting.

A marvelous succession of people of one kind or another came through his office. He had become a very well known and prominent figure, sought by many. I stayed with Bohlen until he retired in early 1969. I was hoping to get an overseas assignment at that stage. But the day before he left, Bohlen, without consulting me, went to see Alexis Johnson, who was to replace him, even though he was to receive the more exalted title of Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Bohlen had a great loyalty to his staff, so he persuaded Johnson that I should be assigned to him. Johnson already had both a special assistant and an aide and I was to be the third staff member. I was simply told that I would be assigned to his office, because someone had to maintain continuity; I was to be one of two people on the Seventh Floor who would remain as administrations (Johnson to Nixon) changed. So I stayed with Alex and learned a lot more. I worked with John Goetz, who was the other special assistant, and John Manjo, who was the staff aide. They were great guys. I enjoyed watching the transition from one national administration to another—the policy reviews, the new ambassadorial assignments, etc. I would get odd jobs to be done; I would monitor his phone calls—Alex Johnson would never talk to anybody on the phone without an officer and a secretary listening in.

Johnson was very interested in East Asia. I tried in a small way to focus interest in other areas, particularly the Middle East, because I was interested in the area even if Johnson wasn't. I didn't feel that I was really contributing very much. I was learning, but you can only go so long saying “Gee, I am learning a lot!” without becoming somewhat restless. So I kept my eyes open for a graceful exit even though I liked Alexis Johnson very much. He was not fun like Bohlen was, but he was a straight, very bright professional and I

respected him. He did not tell “war stories” as Bohlen did, but he was knowledgeable, particularly in the areas that interested him.

But, as I mentioned, I started to look for an escape. One day, I met a friend in the hall who asked me whether I would be interested in attending the NATO Defense College in Rome. Halls seemed to be the way assignments were made at the time. I thought that would be a graceful way of leaving the office of the Under Secretary because I could tell Alexis that I had just been “selected” for the College. So in January, 1970, I went off to Rome for six months at the NATO War College.

Q: I would like to return briefly to your tour as Special Assistant to Bohlen and then Johnson. From your Seventh Floor vantage point, what were your views of the transition from the Johnson Administration to Nixon's?

DILLON: I don't remember it being a particularly hostile “take over”. I probably was not at a sufficiently high level to sense any tension, if in fact it ever developed. The new Secretary of State was William Rogers and his deputy was Elliot Richardson. They were both fairly easy-going people. They were not negative about the Foreign Service. Rogers selected as his Counselor Dick Pedersen with whom he worked very closely. Pedersen was a professional. Richardson picked Jonathan Moore, a professional officer from USIA as his assistant. So both the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary had aides who had come from the foreign affairs establishment, who knew it well. Alexis Johnson, the senior Foreign Service officer in the Department, had a very good relationship with the Secretary. I didn't sense a lot of hostility on the Seventh Floor.

There was a problem with the White House. It contained an ambitious history professor by the name of Henry Kissinger. He became the NSC Advisor and immediately devoted himself to undercutting William Rogers. The tensions between the Seventh Floor and the White House's NSC staff became increasingly important. I am sure that that rivalry had existed before, but I had not noticed them. Henry Kissinger quite clearly decided

that he was going to take over foreign affairs and he did. I didn't spot the trend right from the beginning, but it was clear from the outset that Kissinger was very secretive and that the flow of information from the NSC to the Department that had existed previously had suddenly stopped.

Then the NSC started to request a whole series of papers. At first, I thought that this was a serious exercise intended to review US policy. By the time I left, I believed that these requests were simply an effort to neutralize the State Department. The NSC just loaded the Department with an impossible list of papers to be drafted; I am sure that none of the papers were of any consequence. I was told that Rogers, who was a very nice man, was uncomfortable with having Henry Kissinger between himself and the President. Whenever Rogers would insist that he have direct access to Nixon, the President treated him rather graciously, but I think Rogers was aware that he had a problem.

A lot of Johnson's business at the time came from dealing with Defense. There were a lot of problems, most in East Asia—he of course was an expert in the area, particularly Japan. I thought that Alexis may have been a little too soft in his dealings with Defense. It seemed to me that there were occasions when we should have been a little tougher. I don't want to suggest that I had massive disagreements with Johnson or that I saw great truths that the Department was missing, but I did think that we were a little too quick to accept propositions coming from Defense. Johnson was very cozy with the senior officials in Defense. He would undoubtedly say that that was his job and that he was part of a cohesive team. I am sure that was true, but I still felt that State might have asserted itself more on occasion.

The lesson that I drew from the White House operations was that secrecy in government is a self-defeating proposition. There have been a whole series of administrations that have worried about secrecy and “leaks”. It is awful when you are trying to work out a complicated deal to have premature leaks. I get as angry as anybody at that, but over and over again, the emphasis on secrecy had more to do with personal power than national

requirements. I think the NSC staff and Henry Kissinger particularly were culprits in that respect; their secrecy was not for stated reasons, but for the accumulation of personal power. That is very dangerous; unfortunately that process has lasted even to today.

Q: You spent about six months at the NATO War College. How effective was that training?

DILLON: Not particularly effective. It wasn't bad, but it could have been a lot better. I had had very little previous contact with Europeans. My class included a bunch of bright European military officers, usually at the Lieutenant Colonel level, sometimes Colonel. The Americans were usually Colonels. I found it interesting getting to know these people. My respect for them certainly increased through daily contacts. They were bright; they knew a lot of things I didn't know. I learned from them. But I don't think that the NATO Defense College as an institution was particularly impressive. They had an interesting bunch of speakers, but the requirements were not particularly rigorous. Everything was supposed to be in English and French, but in fact, very few of the people there were bilingual. Certainly I was not, although I did listen to the French lectures. The few written assignments were not very challenging. There was a reluctance to push the students. There were thirteen countries represented—everyone except Iceland. There was a willingness to accept the lowest common denominator because the College didn't want to offend anybody. Some countries took the training opportunity very seriously and sent their best officers; others clearly did not.

Q: After the NATO Defense College, you were assigned to Istanbul. What were the dates of that assignment?

DILLON: I was there for one year from July, 1970 to July, 1971. It had been Personnel's intention before I went to the NATO Defense College to assign me to Athens as the Politico-Military Officer after training. That made some sense in light of my experience and the training assignment. I liked the idea, but right in the middle of my time at the Defense College, Henry Tasca, then our Ambassador to Greece, suddenly focused on the fact

that his newly assigned Pol-Mil officer had served in Turkey. I am told that Tasca thought that that would be inappropriate; you couldn't have someone who was a Turkish expert dealings with the Greeks. He apparently became very upset by the thought; he concocted a story which made it look like my assignment was the result of a misunderstanding and that in fact the then occupant of the position, George Warren, really wanted to stay on and would not be available for reassignment in the summer of 1970.

So all of a sudden, I had no assignment after the College. But about a week later, I received a phone call which told me that the deputy Principal Officer in Istanbul was retiring. Personnel wanted to know whether I would be interested in that assignment. Although I would have preferred to have an assignment outside of Turkey, I agreed and went to Istanbul in July 1970. I think that Henry Tasca was absolutely wrong, but as we said, in those days Ambassadors ruled supreme. I was later told that Warren really didn't want to stay, but it was exclusively Tasca's refusal to accept someone with experience in Turkey.

Q: That was an indication how the “hatreds” permeated our own thinking. The Greeks were realistic enough to accept that if you are an American officer at the American Embassy, you represented the United States and no other country. But the Turkish-Greek tensions tended to interfere with many unrelated decisions by the top echelons in our Embassies.

DILLON: The Turks were the same way. They obviously would have preferred an American officer whom they could have convinced of the righteousness of their position, but they understood that an American was an American and that would be his or her point of view. The idea that you could not assign to Turkey someone who had served in Greece was sheer nonsense and I am sure the reverse was also true. In fact, there may have been some value to the US to make such cross-fertilization assignments.

Q: Who was the Consul General in Istanbul in 1970?

DILLON: It was Jim Spain, who had recently arrived. Jim and I had met briefly once; I certainly remembered him. The assignment had been made before he had become Consul General, but he didn't question it. It became a very happy association. We have remained very good friends over the years.

Q: What was the major function of our Consul General in Istanbul in 1970?

DILLON: Istanbul was the publishing, industrial and commercial capital of Turkey. It is a larger city than Ankara. It had a large expatriate colony; it was the only city in Turkey which had an important American expatriate presence. A major portion of our commercial relationships were conducted through Istanbul. We had important intelligence connections in Istanbul with a fairly active CIA presence there. It cooperated with the Turks, but was primarily targeted on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They monitored the traffic through the Straits. We had a constant stream of defectors walking into the office. The consular section was quite large because much of the travel to the US originated from Istanbul.

I think however that the publishing and newspaper activities were the most important aspect about Istanbul. It was a great job for the Public Affairs Officer. It was the center of artistic and cultural life of Turkey. Istanbul was a lot of fun; it is very overcrowded, but very lively. Every good citizen of Istanbul still believes that his or her city is still the capital of Turkey, but since I have spent seven years of my life in Ankara, I can assure you that it is Ankara that is the capital of Turkey, at least in political terms. Now that I have retired from the Service I can say that I am not sure that I would have kept any of the other constituent posts open except Istanbul.

Q: I would like to return to your comments on the publishing activities in Istanbul. How easy or difficult was it for the US to get its story told in the Turkish media?

DILLON: You had to work at it. The Turkish press, the editors and reporters, tended not to be pro-American. They were above all Turkish nationalists; to the degree they showed any foreign interest, it was primarily Europe that attracted their attention. The Turkish intelligentsia in Istanbul tended to share European prejudices about American culture and intellectual life. But some of our people were very successful in “selling the US story”. They learned to speak Turkish and had a great deal of influence with the media. I don't mean to suggest that the Turks printed “puff” pieces about the US, but they did moderate the tone of their analysis of the United States. Also, unlike some of my Foreign Service colleagues, I recognized the value of our cultural programs, which, I must confess, I had not noticed earlier. The visits of American writers, performers, artists of various kinds were effective in Istanbul because, as is true in many other parts of the world, there was a tendency to accept the idea that the United States was a cultural wasteland, a wealthy Philistine country that existed to be manipulated and milked; of course many foreigners have that attitude. The texture of American society that was provided by our artistic and cultural representatives was very important in influencing the Turks. In more recent years, an increasing number of Turks have come to the US and have returned with a different impression of the country. In the '70s, that kind of travel was not so common. Official Turks would come to the US, but others had not yet begun to visit the States; they preferred Paris or some other European city. I did notice attitudinal changes in some Turks. America is a complex country, but we are intellectually respectable and creative; just look at our music and theater and even our literature. The fact is that we are way ahead of Europe. I don't tell foreigners that, but it is true. For the Istanbul intellectual community—academics, media (there were about seven or eight competing newspapers including three enormously successful commercial enterprises)—to get a feeling for American culture was very important and I think it has paid off. The last time I was in Turkey, which now has been a few years ago, I was struck by the difference in attitudes towards us.

During many of my years of service in Turkey, the Turks were extremely anti-American. In part that was probably the reaction to the Menderes' years when many Turks felt that

their country had become much too involved in the American camp. They tended to see us only in terms of military alliances; that turned off a lot of the Turks. They considered us pro-Greek; they believed that in their various disputes with Greece, the United States always and automatically supported their enemy. The peasants did not have that attitude. In a Turkish village, if you were an American, it did not arouse any hostility, but that was not true among intellectuals, who played a major role in the Turkish body politic. We do not have a similar class here, but I think the standing of intellectuals in Turkey is akin to that existing in Europe, particularly central and eastern Europe. They of course ascribed tremendous importance to themselves. It was easy to laugh at them and frequently that was done. But in some sense, they were quite important because they affected the bureaucracy, which was an important element in society. The intellectuals also affected the military officers to a far greater degree than most understood. University professors and newspaper people were chartered members of the intelligentsia; so it was important to have some influence on them.

Q: Let me ask you about American prisoners in Turkish jails.

DILLON: That problem really came sometime later. You remember that I mentioned that I stayed in Istanbul for only one year because in 1971, the Department needed a country director for Turkey. Jim Spain, who is a very imaginative fellow, saw the value of having on the desk someone with whom he had worked recently. He called the DCM at the Embassy—Dave Cuthell—and talked to him and the Ambassador, Bill Handley. He told them that he had a great idea; he had a terrific deputy in Istanbul whom he thought he might be able to talk into returning to Washington to be the country director. I was happy with the thought. I was an FSO-3, the job was classified as FSO-1 and that is always a helpful situation for promotion purposes. Handley bought the proposition and called the Department and insisted that I be appointed. Frank Cash, who was the current country director, accepted the idea and he sold it to the rest of the Department. I was the country director from Summer, 1971 to the Summer of 1974.

It was shortly after my return to Washington that the issue of Americans in Turkish prisons broke. I can remember it very well. I was sitting in my office in January or February 1972, when I got a phone call from a woman, who told me that the last time she had seen her daughter had been on Thanksgiving, 1971. She had come home and then had left to visit a friend somewhere in the South. The woman said that she had never heard from the daughter again and she was very concerned. She called me because she had just heard on the radio that four Americans—a young man and three women—had just been arrested trying to cross the border between Syria and Turkey and she was certain that her daughter was one of three Americans. I asked how she knew that. She said that she couldn't explain it, but she was absolutely certain that her daughter was among the group arrested. I asked her if she had heard any names; she hadn't. Had she heard any other information which would lead her to the conclusion? No!

But she turned out to be right. Her daughter had been one of four Americans arrested. Their van had been found filled with hashish. They were apparently on their way to Germany through Greece and were going to take a ferry boat from Turkey. In any case, from then on, I was deeply involved. In fact, later on, when I became the DCM in Ankara, the four were still in jail. I was there when they were finally released in the late '70s.

Q: What were the main issues during your three years as country director?

DILLON: The biggest political issue was the opium problem. The Cyprus issue was quiescent until July, 1974 when it erupted. Turkey was one of the countries which by international agreement was permitted to grow opium. Turkish law required the government to buy all of the production. They had theoretically control of the production, although we maintained that it was inadequate. The Ministry of Agriculture bought all opium grown and then sold it to foreign pharmaceutical companies. The problem was leakage of the legal crop; it was not illegal production. There were no hidden poppy fields, but it was diversions from the legal crop that created the tensions. Inspectors from the Agriculture Ministry would visit the fields and make an estimate of the yield. That told the

farmers how much they had to produce. Generally, the fields produce exactly what the estimate had been. Any surplus went into illegal channels. The big smuggling families, Kurds from Gaziantep—were the same people who were involved in the illegal arms trade, cigarettes, silk stockings, etc. They got involved in opium, which was smuggled in the form of a morphine base. These people were part of an international drug trafficking network. It was often concealed in Turkish lorries to Germany from where it was distributed world wide.

Opium became a major issue between the US and Turkey. There were a lot of different facets. In the end, however it was resolved and became one of the few successes that I can point to that I was personally involved in. We worked out a system that worked. We financed the construction of a poppy straw factory, which was a complicated industrial process. It cost $25 million to build the factory. The traditional way to harvest opium was for women to go through the field and make a cut in the bulb. Forty-eight hours later, they would return to scrape off the sticky residue and collect it in a large ball. That harvesting methods became illegal. The farmers had to sell the entire poppy plant intact to the government which in turn processed it as “straw” in the factory. If you knew the area well and the growing method, it was impossible to cheat. There was no way in which growth could have been concealed and you could not just cut a few bulbs to make the harvest worth while. Opium growth is very labor intensive; a lot had to be grown and harvested and there was just no way to conceal the growth areas.

As far as I know, the opium growth in Turkey is still thoroughly supervised by the Turkish government.

Q: Who suggested the construction of that factory?

DILLON: I don't remember the fellow's name, but it was an AID officer. In those days, I was not enthusiastic about assistance programs; when I started to work with this program, I changed my opinion. This officer was an agricultural expert who had spent years working

on the opium problem. He described to me the manufacturing process; by this time I had been dealing with the issue long enough—it was then the late '70s— that I immediately recognized the validity and attractiveness of the proposal. There were some at the time who were skeptical and concerned by the costs involved. But our AID man had actually seen one of these plants in operation—I think it may have been in Holland. He knew what he was talking about. Other control attempts had been made, including a Turkish government decree that all growing of opium was illegal. It did that under great pressure from the US government—I was with Ambassador Handley when he made our views known to the Turks. Our position became a major political issue in Turkey and was never successful and we finally changed our position. In any case, despite some reluctance to construct and finance the processing plant, it was done and it worked. The AID man later went to Pakistan to see whether he could find some ways to control that drug growing problem, but I don't think we ever brought that under control. It was a different problem because in Turkey, the government controlled the growing areas, which was not true in Pakistan. There the poppy fields were in areas that the government could not really control or in some cases had no real jurisdiction at all.

Q: Tell us more about the "jail" issue while you were Office Director.

DILLON: You are referring to the episode that became a book and a movie later called "The Midnight Express". The book was written by Billy Hayes who was caught smuggling hashish and then wrote about his experiences. He was from Long Island, a nice but naive young man. He was caught at the Istanbul airport with a whole pack of stuff on him—much too much to pretend that it was only for personal use. He was put in jail. We were very concerned from the beginning and tried to get him released, both because we felt the jail sentence was excessive and because we saw what the sentence was doing to Turkey's image in the US. We would try to explain that problems to the Turks and they would get very huffy. Senior Turkish officials would say to me: "You are trying to force us to let this criminal out of jail because it makes a bad impression in the United States. That doesn't impress us at all!". I saw Hayes' father at the Department several times; it was very

sad. The father spent all of his savings; he mortgaged his house on Long Island; spent all of his money on various schemes to spring his son, even though we advised him not to waste his money. But he was a sucker for any slick character who would come along and promise that for a certain amount of money, he could promise to get his son released. Of course, none of these schemes ever worked. Billy finally escaped from his jail which was down on the Sea of Marmaris. He walked off one day. I suspect that the Turks let him go, although no one has ever told me so. There were reasons to believe that the Turks knew that he would try to escape and that they let it happen. He escaped to Bursa, which was the nearest city, and then on to Istanbul and the Greek border across the river. During the time he was in jail, he was visited frequently by our consular officers from Istanbul. They never reported that he was physically mistreated except for a beating his first night in jail. I think that they would probably have known or noticed if anything more had happened.

When Hayes got back to the US, he indicated to someone in my office that he was greatly upset and ashamed at what he had done to his family, who he had more or less bankrupted. He was approached by a free lance writer and offered a way to earn back some of the money that had been wasted on trying to get him released. The writer and the young man collaborated on a book that was named “Midnight Express”. I have read it; it is not bad, but Billy Hayes admitted that the book was slightly exaggerated and dramatized. In the book he alleged that when he was first apprehended, he was beaten. He did not allege other beatings. When the movie was made, it included not only brutal treatment —there is a particularly savage scene in the movie when the young American bites the lip of a Turkish prison official who was abusing him. I don't think any of those incidents ever occurred. The movie also strongly implied that our own DEA played a major role in fingering Hayes; I don't think that was true either. It was not alleged in the book and I never saw any reports that even hinted at such a possibility. Our Istanbul staff was very sympathetic towards Billy Hayes. Furthermore, DEA was not interested in tracking down individual young American hashish smugglers abroad. It was interested in large operations which would eventually impinge on drug imports into the US

But both the book and the movie were very damaging to US-Turkish relationships. Americans, as with most people, are only too willing to blame foreigners for their problems. The drug problem was already headline material at the time; President Nixon had declared "war" on the drug trade. I really shudder at those words now. In any case, here was an opportunity for us to blame others; we blamed them for producing opium and then we blamed them for the harsh treatment of young Americans caught smuggling. The Turks saw us as hypocrites because on the one hand we beat them over the head and shoulders constantly about drugs, but when Americans were arrested smuggling the stuff we applied massive pressure to release them on the grounds that it was damaging to the relationship with the United States. It was a very troublesome issue. It was one that various Congressmen loved to posture about and we were always caught in between. You were talking to the Turks either about tightening up their drug trafficking surveillance or about releasing Americans who had been caught in the smuggling act. We had a hard time dealing with the problem.

I left the Office Directorship in Summer, 1974, just when the Cypriot National Guard, led by Greek officers, took over the government. When that happened, I had just moved to being acting Director for Greek-Turkish-Cypriot Affairs. Not only was this a new job, but it also came at the time when responsibility for these issues was being transferred from NEA, which understood them, to EUR, which had dealt with them only superficially. The organizational shift had been taken primarily to assuage the Greeks who wished to be perceived as Europeans and did not feel that they belonged in the Bureau of Near East Affairs. It was also because Henry Kissinger thought all NATO countries should be in the same bureau. From the day the coup took place—July 15—I was swept up in trying to prevent the Greeks and the Turks from being foolish and in trying to obtain a cease fire. I went out to the area with Joe Sisco in a very unsuccessful trip; we bounced around. We were in Ecevit's (the Turkish Prime Minister) office at 4 o'clock in the morning, pleading with him not to invade Cyprus. He triumphantly announced to us that Turkish troops were landing on Cyprus at that very moment. We returned to the US and then I almost

immediately accompanied Bill Buffum to Geneva where we tried to arrange a cease fire between Greece and Turkey.

By the end of that trip, I was totally exhausted. I returned to the States just in time to pack up and leave for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where I had been assigned as DCM. I left the Cyprus crisis unsolved; it is still unsolved almost twenty years later.

Q: Before we pursue your career in Malaysia, I would like to ask about the Cyprus matter. As the issue developed, how did you find the attitude and reporting from our three involved posts: Nicosia, Athens and Ankara?

DILLON: Let me go back to tell a story as background. CIA had reported that Brigadier General Ioannidis (head of the Military Police), who had been part of the coup that had overthrown Papadopoulos the previous November, in a conversation he had had with one of CIA's employees, had stood up, knocked a few things off the table and had sworn that he would rid the world of the Communist, Archbishop Makarios, who was ruining Cyprus. The reporter was a Greek-American who had been a long time employee of CIA. The meeting was dutifully reported through CIA channels. I was called by the branch chief at CIA headquarters asking me whether I has seen this report. I had not. So he said he wanted to come to the Department to discuss it with me. That was very unusual in itself. The CIA official added that he was convinced that the Greeks were prepared to overthrow Makarios. I agreed with his analysis.

I had two colleagues at the time: John Day, in charge of the Greek desk—a very good officer with a lot of Greek experience—and Tom Boyatt, who had had a lot of Cyprus experience. We immediately huddled. It was John Day who really understood the Greek situation. He pointed out that Ioannidis had sent us a message, giving us a little of time to see whether we would speak out on the coup. We decided to go to our boss and try to convince him that a message had to be sent back immediately putting the Greeks on notice that the US would not countenance or accept the coup in Cyprus. The people in

the European bureau, not having much background in this whole matter, showed a lot of skepticism and raised many questions both about the facts and the assumptions. The leadership of the EUR was very strong; Art Hartman, who is one of the best professionals that I ever met, was the Assistant Secretary. The Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of our area was Wells Stabler, who was a superb officer. Both were very uncertain about what to do. They didn't know us and as I said knew little of the background. So they passed the issue to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Joe Sisco. Joe, who had had some experience with Cyprus, came down and we drafted a cable to the Ambassadors. I wanted our message to be sent back through CIA channels to Ioannidis so that there would be no misunderstanding of our position. People objected. They said that the US government doesn't communicate that way with foreign officials and we don't communicate through low level CIA officials. What a pompous position! It was sacrilege that we would even consider communicating with a one star general! Of course, the fact that he was the power behind the throne did not seem to impress the EUR people.

Finally, we sent a very general cable to Athens. All the important direct messages were deleted. All it said was that the US Ambassador was to express to the Greek government our view that we were opposed to violence on Cyprus. What news! Could we have taken any other position? We argued that this was not nearly strong enough and that the Greeks would never “get the message”. Joe tried to bolster our position by calling Elizabeth Brown, who was then Political Counselor in Athens. He asked her whether she had gotten our cable. She acknowledged receipt and said that she had carried out the Department's instructions. Joe turned to us indicating that the matter had been taken care of. It was quite clear from the conversation, which we could hear over the speaker phone, that Brown, who was a very good officer, did not have the faintest idea what Joe was talking about. She did not indicate that she had understood that the issue was a very serious one that required special attention and care.

John Day, in particular, was the political officer who had the best understanding of the Greek scene. I thought his insights and tactics were absolutely correct. Nevertheless,

after this episode, his career did not prosper. It was a great mistake for us not to handle the matter in the way that John had recommended, namely to use the same CIA channel through which we had gotten Ioannidis' original message. The General had to be told directly that the US had received his message and that we were unalterably opposed to any coup on Cyprus.

Immediately after the coup, we were told that Makarios was dead. Shortly thereafter, we discovered that Makarios was not dead, but that he had escaped and that the British had evacuated him to Malta. Initially, the Turks indicated great concern about the coup and expressed themselves as supporting the legitimate government of the Archbishop. Tom Boyatt said at the time—and he was absolutely right—that there was only one solution; namely to return Makarios to Cyprus and reinstall him as the legitimate head of the government. A lot of Americans, and I was one of them, didn't like Makarios; he was a hypocrite, full of humbug, very much anti-West, but Boyatt was right. When I was asked whether the Turks would accept the return of Makarios, I said that I thought that if it were done quickly, they would accede. If time passed, then the Turks might well raise objections.

The issue of what we should do next was pushed up to the secretary, Henry Kissinger, who fancied himself an expert on these matters. He immediately developed some grand scheme. He had never liked Makarios and was happy to see him gone. He liked the situation and could only see us as unimaginative bureaucrats at lower levels who could not seize opportunities. He talked about a Clerides solution. (Clerides was the leader of the moderate Greek faction on Cyprus). Boyatt, who knew Cyprus, said that Clerides was a grand man, but he was not the solution. The saga continued and we did nothing to try to get Makarios back. Gradually, the Turkish position hardened and then it became clear that our job was to try to dissuade the Turks from invading the island. Tom Boyatt and I accompanied Joe Sisco on a trip to the area. I think I must have gone for a whole week without ever going to bed, while we shuttled back and forth between Greece and Turkey trying to persuade both to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. I remember well the night

we spent with Ecevit. I was the only one in the American delegation who knew him. I knew what he would do; he loved the opportunity presented him. He couldn't have cared less about the American position; he was going to invade Cyprus.

Bill Macomber was the Ambassador. He, Sisco, Boyatt and I and a couple of others met with Ecevit. It was after midnight. Turkish troops were already on ships. Ecevit, savoring every minute, said to Sisco that the Turks don't make the same mistake twice. In 1967 (the Vance Mission), the Americans had urged the Turks not to invade Cyprus and they hadn't. It had been a mistake and the Turks would not repeat it again. Bill Macomber made an impassioned plea, saying that Ecevit was known as humanitarian and a lot of other stuff. At about 2 a.m., Ecevit said that he would consult with his Cabinet, although he didn't want to raise our hopes and he would then let us know.

We returned to the Ambassador's house and waited there until about 4 a.m. when Ecevit called. He said that as he spoke, the Turkish troops were landing on Cyprus. We pleaded again although it was obviously useless. We then dashed off to the airport and boarded our airplane. Then we started arguing about where to go. It was now dawn. Should we go to Athens to ask the Greeks to cease and desist? (The Greek government was disintegrating at this point). Should we go to Spain and wait to see what happens next? I didn't have any good ideas except that I was certain that we should leave Ankara. While we were debating back and forth, we got a phone call from Washington, ordering us to Athens. Since we had failed to persuade the Turks not to invade, we were to try to persuade the Greeks not to intervene. Just as we finished the conversation, we were told by the Turkish authorities that we could not take off and that we had to stay put. In a burst of bravado, Joe Sisco turned to the pilot and said: “Take off! We are going to Athens”. Even though the Turks had told us that the airport was closed, we ran down the runway and took off. Fortunately, nothing happened and we got to Athens only to find that the Greeks had no government. So we had great difficulties finding anyone to talk to. I don't

remember much about the conversations in Athens because, as the Turkish expert in the party, I was kept busy writing up what had happened in Ankara.

Q: It sounds like a serious miscalculation by the Department on Turkish attitudes. Did you ever get a chance to discuss that with Kissinger before the ill-fated mission?

DILLON: Yes, once, just before departure. Tom Boyatt, Joe Sisco, myself and some others went to Kissinger's office. Eagleburger, then Kissinger's special assistant, was there. We were there to brief Henry and to discuss what we might do on this special mission. In fact, the meeting consisted of a lecture by Henry Kissinger on history which was totally irrelevant to the issue that we were to address. With a couple of exceptions—Boyatt and I among them—, most of the other participants kept remarking: “Gee, Mr. Secretary, I never knew the history of the eastern Mediterranean, until I just heard you explain it” and other similar vacuous remarks. That is a slight exaggeration, but that was the tone of the conversation. Then at the end, Kissinger asked whether anyone had any questions. I asked a couple, which went essentially unanswered. I tried to use the questions as a way of showing that what we were about to do was not going to work. I thought that our only chance of getting the Turks' attention would have been to threaten to cut off aid. The Turks were never going to take us seriously unless we threatened to suspend aid immediately. I knew that that was the only language the Turks would understand. I was convinced that the Turks would invade without some very strong US threat or action. Tom Boyatt, having watched my performance and having seen how unsuccessful it had been, just said: “I disagree with you, Mr. Secretary. This isn't going to work!”. Kissinger just looked at him and turned away. Nothing further was said and we all got up and left the office, went to the airport and took off.

Q: I might just note here that when I went to the Senior Seminar shortly after the events that you have described, Tom Boyatt was in the same class and the word was that he had been assigned there by Kissinger just to get him out of the way.

DILLON: That doesn't surprise me. It was a bad show. One of the lessons to be drawn from it is that this was one of those cases in which the area experts knew whereof they spoke and their superiors didn't. John Day was never promoted again, in part because I think he had been right about so many things. As for Boyatt and myself, even though I think our careers were probably damaged by this episode, we both recovered and became Ambassadors. While Boyatt and I were running around with Joe Sisco, John Day was the only one left in Washington who knew anything about the area. So he was in constant controversy with senior officials, who knew far less then he did. I am convinced that it was this that cooked John's career. I thought that everything John said about Greek politics and their reactions and how we should handle them, was absolutely right. When it came to Cyprus, I thought Boyatt was right and I don't think I was totally wrong about my analysis of Turkey and its reactions.

Q: That is very interesting background to a continuing thorn in US foreign relations. As you mentioned, when the Cyprus crisis sprung up in 1974, you were headed to Malaysia as the DCM. How did you get that assignment?

DILLON: I was “GLOPed”. You will recall that Henry Kissinger had decided that all area specialists should have out-of-area assignments. As I understood it, he had gone down to Mexico to a big conference and had run into all these Latin American types who had never served anywhere else. He instructed that they be reassigned out of the area. When it was pointed out that his instructions would mean that lot of other reassignments would have to take place, he decided that all Foreign Service personnel would have to have at least one tour out of their area of specialization. So in my case, it meant an assignment to South-east Asia—out of the eastern Mediterranean. A friend of mine had told me that the Bureau for East Asian Affairs was looking for a DCM for Malaysia; he said that if I were interested, he would put in a plug for me with the Ambassador, Frank Underhill. Frank had the opposite problem; he had many years of experience in South-east Asia. He was a wonderful man and an excellent professional. He was on his second tour in Kuala Lumpur;

therefore he was under pressure from the Department to chose a DCM who had had no experience in Malaysia or the area. He had gotten a list of seven or eight candidates; why he chose me I don't know, but I am glad he did.

So off I went and arrived towards the end of August, 1974. Most of the time, it was a happy tour. I confess that towards the end, I became somewhat bored. When you are accustomed to dealing with Turkey-Greece-Cyprus, there is constant tension and never a dull moment. There were real American interests at stake in that area. This was my first assignment where there really weren't strong American interests at stake. We didn't wish the Malaysians any bad luck and there was always some interest in the on-going emergency on the Thai border—oil had been discovered there. But it was very different from being in the eastern Mediterranean. Malaysia was a much more typical diplomatic assignment during which you spent a lot of time going to the Foreign Ministry, arguing with officials about obscure U.N. resolutions which neither they or we cared very much about. So by the time the three years had expired, I was bored and ready for a change.For the first two years, I enjoyed it very much, particularly because Underhill was so good and I felt that I had learned a lot from him.

My job as DCM was a fairly standard executive officer role. He encouraged me to get as far into substance as I wanted. There wasn't that much pressure on the substantive side. I did get involved to some respect and tried to become familiar with the issues, but both the Ambassador and Frank Bennett, who was the chief of the Political Section, were very good and were both long-time experts in the area. I didn't feel the need to compete with them on substance, even though I was very interested. So I played the standard DCM role: I served as the executive officer of the Embassy, sort of running the mission, and stood in the place of the Ambassador when he was gone. But I didn't try to become a South-east Asia expert.

It was the first assignment since early in my career during which I did not feel that I contributed on the policy side. I occasionally drafted messages, but frankly this was a situation in which the policy judgements were very much the Ambassador's. I agreed with

them; he was a brilliant man and very nice. I did see eye-to-eye with him, so that there weren't any policy differences. We both had the same point of view. Neither of us was very enthusiastic about American involvement in the area. We were reducing our presence in Vietnam heading towards the final disaster. Underhill had served all around the area; he was annoyed with a lot of Washington initiatives which tended to involve us more deeply and didn't make any sense. Everyone—AID, CIA or somebody—always seemed to have some great scheme to save Malaysia. Well, Malaysia didn't want to be “saved”; it was happy with the way things were going.

In the early summer, 1975, when Underhill was gone, a team came from Washington to explore the provision of assistance to the Malaysian armed forces to help them in their battles against the Communist terrorists (CTs). Who were these Communist terrorists? They were probably something like 1,200 Chinese who had been in the jungle for many, many years. They were the remnants of the old emergency, which had never ceased. It was kind of a nasty little jungle warfare that was just continuing. At any time, there would be 10 or 11 battalions of the Army or from the Police Field Force (PFF) deployed in northern Malaysia, just south of the Batong salient in Thailand. The guerrillas would move back and forth across the border. They would find sanctuary across the border and then move south periodically. They supported themselves by terrorizing the Chinese merchants in the towns on the fringes of the jungles. They would occasionally assassinate somebody. In fact, shortly before I arrived, they had managed to murder the Chief of Police. Casualties on the Malaysian side probably ran two or three per month. It was an insurgency that in fact was very well contained. The Malaysians were probably putting the right amount of effort into this low-level warfare. In any case, Washington sent a team headed by an Admiral, who turned out to be William Crowe, later Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Ted Shackley, a well known CIA man who used to be the station chief in Laos, was on the team along with an Army Colonel who was an expert in irregular warfare. When Underhill heard that this team was coming, he was sufficiently concerned that he almost delayed his home leave. But he decided that if I couldn't handle it, then I didn't

deserve to be a Foreign Service officer. And I agreed with that judgment. I promised not to give away the store. Underhill felt that we should not involve ourselves in the Malaysian affairs. The team talked to a lot of people in Kuala Lumpur, particularly on the intelligence and psychological side. They spent about a week or ten days interviewing and talking about the insurgency. Members of our staff went along on one or two meetings; I went to a couple of them. But in general we gave the team a free hand. I thought that the team was very nice; I was particularly struck by Crowe. At one stage, we went to the jungle to observe the insurgency. We got in a small plane and flew to Ipoh, a primarily Chinese town on the border of the area. Then we got into a helicopter, flew off into the jungle, landing at a firing point, manned by a PFF battalion. There were distinctions between the PFF and the Army; I considered the former to be more competent even if it was lightly armed. The Army tended to be commanded by Malay royalty and they weren't very great soldiers in my view. The PFF and others were good soldiers. In any case, we had dinner at the firing point, we stood by while a howitzer fired into the jungle, but we never did see any insurgents. Crowe loved it; he really got a kick out of this trip. He enjoyed the PFF officers and was happy with the display they put on for him and his team. It was a lot of fun. Crowe had been in Vietnam and had served on a jungle river boat there and was therefore familiar with the environment. He kept saying how much fun it was and that he hadn't had as much fun since having left Vietnam. I enjoyed the visit myself, but I began to worry that Crowe was becoming so fascinated with the activity that he might just pursue the wrong policy. We helicoptered back to Ipoh, where we got on our small plane and back to Kuala Lumpur. Three days later, the team came to my office. Crowe had a big smile on his face. Shackley was glowering. So I sensed that there was some tension in the team. Crowe sat down and in his “old boy” Oklahoma style said: “Bob, I think these folks are doing just fine. I don't think they need any assistance from us!” I could have kissed him. Shackley obviously strongly disagreed, but there wasn't much he could do. So ended the Washington mission. I think the story illustrates that Crowe was a brilliant guy and had the right instincts. It also illustrates what mischief Washington can sometime dream up. Shackley and his crowd were desperately looking for some way to carry on what they

had been doing for a long time in South-east Asia—Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It was not needed in Malaysia and would have been a great mistake for us to get involved there; certainly the Malaysians didn't want us. If it had been a lesser person than Crowe, he might have gone along with the Washington desire, but Crowe very clearly saw the potential pitfalls and had enough stature and strength of character to say “No” to Shackley.

Q: How about AID?

DILLON: It wanted to have a program in Malaysia. The Peace Corps had a presence and we thought that that was a worthwhile activity. But we did not believe that there should be an AID mission in Kuala Lumpur. AID was interested because Malaysia was successful; that is a little facetious, but AID was so tired of being given work in the “basket cases”, that it wanted to work in a country which might well succeed. Malaysian exports were doing very well: oil, rubber, tin and palm oil. Oil was just beginning; the other commodities had been traditional exports. During the mid-70s, these commodities had a good world market. That provided enough foreign currency for economic development. The Chinese business community in particular was extremely competent. The Malays, who dominated the government, were not as concerned with “economic development” as they were in getting their own people into the private business sector. That was called the Bumiputra program (Bumiputra meaning “the sons of the soil”). There had to be Malays in on everything. Much of the government's effort was directed to what we would call an “equal opportunity program” or quotas. There were Australian, New Zealand and British businessman located in Malaysia who were under a great deal of pressure from the government to employ Malays, not Chinese. Malaysia is not a big country; it might have had 10-12 million inhabitants. It was not a wealthy nation, but the economy was growing fast. I have a lot of respect for AID. I have enjoyed my association with AID over the years. But in this case, I thought it was very clear that the Agency wanted to get into Malaysia because it appeared that there would be a successful economic development effort and it wanted to be part of a success story. I didn't consider that a very good reason to establish an AID mission.

Typically, the US Government was also interested in selling arms to Malaysia as soon as it became clear that the country could afford to pay for them. Every time you turned around, there were salesmen from our Defense Department, wanting to sell F-5 planes (the Northrop built fighter-bomber). The Malaysians were finally persuaded to buy 20 or 30 of them. It was not clear that they needed them; on the other hand, it really isn't up to foreigners to tell a sovereign country that they don't need armaments. They certainly did not need them to meet the insurgency. Interestingly enough, when they finally got them, they immediately (within weeks after the arrival of the first planes) mounted air strikes against the insurgents in the north and pounded their own positions instead, killing 15-20 of their own troops. What made it even worst was that under ordinary fighting circumstances, Malaysia would have lost that many soldiers in 6-7 months. This time they managed to do the same damage in 15-20 minutes.

These are examples of our activities in Malaysia. We had a very good agricultural attach#, John DeCoursey, who was a lot of fun because he knew a lot. An agricultural attach# in a country like Malaysia knew everything. If you are out in a plantation, he can tell you where everything is, what the markets are, etc. His reporting was interesting and important. We bought commodities from Malaysia and we exported machinery and other things.

The three years in Malaysia were conventional in a lot of ways, but a happy assignment. I have already described the Crowe mission. I should mention another episode which happened a few days after they left. This had to do with terrorism. My wife was going to Indonesia for a teachers' conference—she was teaching at the International School of Kuala Lumpur. I went to Jakarta with her for about three days and then I returned to K.L. I was back at my desk, trying to look important, shuffling through telegrams, thinking undoubtedly deep and important thoughts. All of a sudden, I heard a series of shots. I recognized immediately the sound of small arms fire, 9 mm pistol shots. I ran to the door of my office; there were people outside milling around wondering what was going on. It was hard to tell. The Embassy occupied the top three and a half floors of a skyscraper

in the middle of Kuala Lumpur. The half floor was occupied by our consular section. The rest of the floor was occupied by the Swedish Embassy, which was run by a Charge'. We recognized quickly that the shooing was taking place on that floor. So we rushed down the steps to see what was going on. There was still some shooting going on. We could see the door of the elevator opening and one of our Malay guards being shot at by someone in the corridor. The guard took a bullet right under the eye and fell back into the elevator. The door then closed and we managed to get the man out on a different floor and to a hospital. Then another guard came up and he was shot through the chin—the bullet came out through the jaw. It was then that I understood for the first time why in situations like this the traditional metal jacket is the wrong kind of ammunition. Fortunately, in this particular case, it was the “bad” guys who were using steel jacketed bullets. But our guys were both shot in the head; fortunately they both survived. One wasn't even knocked down. But the ricochet effect of the bullets was the worst. Every time someone fired, the bullets would bounce all over the place; that was terrifying. You get a sense of being shot at from all sides. We sealed the floor off very quickly with Marines and our security officer standing on the stairs to prevent the perpetrators, whom we did not know at the time, from going upstairs to our other floors. The elevators were shut off. The Malaysian police arrived very quickly and sealed off the floor from below. So the terrorists were locked into the 9th. floor. We didn't really know what was going on; we were speculating whether it was some “nut” who had a perceived grievance against the consular section or was it a terrorist attack. In effect, we reached a stalemate for several hours.

Occasionally, we would hear firing. Fortunately no one was killed, although there were four wounded. At some stage of the siege, one of the Indian guards attracted attention and was wounded. At sometime during the early afternoon, a note was thrown out by the perpetrators, announcing that they were members of the Japanese Red Army. Their demands were primarily on the Japanese government. The Japanese Deputy Prime Minister happened to be visiting Washington at the time; we assumed that the attack was timed to coincided with that visit. The Japanese had some JRA people in prison; our

“invaders' threatened to harm their hostages if their colleagues in Japanese prisons were not released. At about the same time, a Foreign Service officer, Dick Jackson, who had a beautiful voice, and I were standing at the switchboard. The telephones were still working and a Malay operator was on duty. She answered one of the incoming calls and turned to me: “The head of the terrorists wishes to speak to you”. This was my first experience in this kind of a situation, although I had picked up a couple of pointers somewhere along the line. One was that the decision maker should avoid being one of the intermediaries; that puts one in an impossible position.

As I said, Dick Jackson was standing next to me. For the next four days, he brilliantly distinguished himself. In any case, since he was standing there, I asked him to answer the call. He instantly appeared to understand the game, although he also had never had any experience. He spoke in a nice, friendly, unthreatening voice. He kept saying; “You know I don't make the decisions, but I will relay your concern to our Charge' who is here in the building”. He sounded just like the text book said he should. So we had conversations with the JRA, especially about their demands and threats to execute some hostages if the Japanese government did not release some of their prisoners in Japan. By this time —the episode had now lasted several hours—a huge crowd had gathered outside our building. Newsmen began descending from all over the world. The only areas outside that were not filled with people were those which could have been targets of the terrorists' fire. The Japanese Ambassador arrived. A “war” room was set up on the ground floor in some offices belonging to the bank that owned the building. The Minister of Interior, Ghazali Shafi, came personally. It is important to understand the configuration of the elevators because they played a major role in the incident. There were three elevators in the building. Two faced into the lobbies; by this time, both of those had been disabled and were stuck on the 9th floor. The other elevator, although in the same bank, was the freight elevator and it had doors opposite to the passenger ones. Our communications were through this elevator because the way it faced, no one could shoot through its doors. The steps were closed because we and the terrorists had established fields of fire on the

steps. So I went down the freight elevator to the meeting on the first floor. That was the beginning of an exhausting four day siege. The Japanese sent their Minister of Transport to supervise their side of the process; he brought with him a man from their Middle East office because for some reason they assumed that the JRA has something to do with the Middle East—why they came to that conclusion is still a mystery to me, although I knew that some of the JRA had been trained in Lebanon. One of the interesting parts of the story is that that Middle East man, with whom I became friendly, is the Japanese Ambassador in Washington today.

A negotiation ensued. I was getting lots of unhelpful advise from Washington. Henry Kissinger, who was the Secretary of State, was on a plane to Belgrade. He communicated with us; he seemed primarily interested that the American Charge' not agree to anything because “the United States does not negotiate with terrorists”, etc. Later, Larry Eagleburger became the main point of contact. He repeated many of Kissinger's injunctions, but in a much more palatable way. I think I understood my role. When I realized that the JRA's demands were against the Japanese and not against us, I was probably the happiest man in the world because, among other things, it made my role a lot easier. The pressure was on the Japanese; the Malaysians just wanted to give in to the terrorists because they wanted to end the incident as rapidly as possible.

Naturally, the electricity was turned off. Kuala Lumpur is in the tropics and the temperature was in the '90s and very humid. We sweated gallons and gallons of water. We had a generator which ran the elevator. I would run up and down from my floor to the ground and back. We continued our communications with Washington. Our telephone line to the Operations Center was kept open the whole time. At the beginning, when Washington called, I answered; then I realized that the same principle which applies to negotiations with terrorists also applies to Washington: let some one else answer the phone. I told my staff that when I was asked for, I “couldn't be found”. Al LaPorta, who is now the DCM in New Zealand—a very capable Foreign Service officer—became the liaison with Washington. I can still see Al, somewhat overweight, bearded, naked to the waist, saying

very politely to Washington: “I just don't know where Dillon is. He may be downstairs, but in any case, I will get a message to him.” It didn't take me long to figure out that if I were always available to the phone, I would be talking to Washington 24 hours each day. Every ambitious so and so in Washington wanted to be in on the action; so they all wanted to talk to me and give me their advice. We wanted advice, in small and well conceived doses, but Washington is very difficult to deal with, particularly in situations like this. People there panic; we felt tremendous tensions, but not panic.

I should mention one particular phase. We had a security officer—Wayne Algire—, who was a large and overweight. He was inventive and resourceful. He was running all over the place as was the Station Chief. We were dropping mikes through the walls in an effort to hear what was going on on the 9th floor. We didn't know how many terrorists there were; we didn't know how many hostages there were. We knew our consul was there. We tried to put together a list of whom might be held hostage. We speculated that there might have been 20-32 hostages. It turned out that there were 52, six or seven Americans and a few other foreigners. But most of the hostages were Malaysian citizens. We provided food and water to all of them during the four days. The terrorists were very suspicious of the food and water. They were afraid to drink anything we sent because they thought it would be drugged or poisoned.

The freight elevator, which moved agonizingly slowly, was of tremendous importance to us since it was the only way we could move up and down. A Marine guard stayed on the elevator at all times. At one point, the elevator stopped running. It had broken. There was great consternation. We finally located by phone the Chinese technician who maintained the elevators. He came to the building. It turned out that the motor that drove the elevator was on the roof. How does the Chinese man get to the roof when the sole elevator was not working and the stairs were blocked by gun fire? We suggested that he walk to the ninth floor, crouch there until an opportune moment arrived and then run across. The maintenance man was no dummy. He said that if we Americans wanted to be foolish like that, that was alright with him, but there was nothing in his job description that required

him to risk his life that way. We tried all sorts of persuasions, but nothing happened. Finally Wayne Algire, overweight as he was, went up on the roof and crawled into the tiny space where the motor was housed. He laid on his back, with a telephone cradled in his ear, taking advice from the Chinese mechanic downstairs. The conversation went on for some time, but eventually the security officer of the American Embassy fixed the elevator! There were many heroes in this incident, but Dick Jackson and Wayne Algire stand out. Finally, the Japanese agreed to exchange some JRA prisoners which they were holding for our hostages. A JAL 747 flew to Kuala Lumpur.

Then another crisis ensued. One of the four JRA prisoners, who was supposed to have been brought from Japan, refused to be part of the exchange. The terrorists didn't believe it. There were extended exchanges. Finally, we were able to patch through a telephone call from our building to the jail where this fourth JRA member was being held. Everybody of course could listen in to the conversation. So we could hear what was going on. The fellow in Japan just didn't want to be any part of this exchange; he wanted to stay in jail. So the terrorists were finally reassured. Then the question arose about asylum. Who wanted them? That was the job of the Malaysian Minister of Interior. That was a further excruciating process. He looked around all over the world. We suggested Libya, but they refused. No one else would take them. Finally, the Libyan government agreed to permit the JAL 747 to land in their country. I remember sitting with the Japanese Ambassador who was sweating buckets; he was very good, but as you can imagine this was a very difficult period for him. We used English because most of the senior Cabinet officials had been educated in England. As the Japanese Ambassador came under greater and greater pressure, his English deteriorated which made matters even more difficult. When we heard that the Libyans would accept the plane, the Japanese Ambassador drew a big sigh and said “Ah So”—exactly what you see and hear in the movies.

Then we had to worry about air clearance for the plane between K.L. and Libya. We managed to get everybody's agreement except from Iran where the Shah—in what I viewed as a grandstand gesture, but which Kissinger might have considered quite

appropriate—said if that plane entered Iranian air space, it would be shot down. So we had to work out a longer route, avoiding Iran. The plane had to be refueled once; Ceylon was chosen for that. Mrs. Bandaranaike was the Prime Minister. The Malaysian Gazali Shafi, who was a very persuasive man, was on the telephone to her. We were all sitting around listening attentively. Mrs. Bandaranaike was saying “No” in a very excited tone. She didn't want any part of the refueling. She said if the plane tried to land, she would order her troops to shoot. Gaz refused to take “No” for an answer; he oozed charm. He was full of understanding for her plight and reassured her of his understanding for her position. On the other hand, he kept pointing out that if Ceylon didn't let the plane land, some innocent people would die which he was sure no one really wanted. After an exhaustive forty-five minutes, Mrs. Bandaranaike finally gave in. The plane would be allowed to fuel, but would be surrounded by Ceylonese troops which would be instructed to shoot if anybody tried to get out. Gaz turned around and gave us a big smile. The Japanese Ambassador once more drew in his breath. By now, all the arrangements were made, except working out the modalities of the prisoners' exchange. That also proved to be excruciating. Every step had to be covered. The terrorists had to come down the steps and board a bus which would be waiting at the entrance. They would be accompanied by all the hostages. The bus would then go to the airport. The terrorists agreed to take out all the explosives which they had dug into our walls and take them to the airport with them. There they would explode them on the tarmac before boarding their plane. They demanded that the JRA prisoners be exchanged at the airport. They also demanded that four senior officials fly to Libya with them where they would be released. At this point, we were talking to the terrorists over some hand-held sets. That enabled us to come down in lock-step; Wayne Algire would say: “I am now going to take one step backward” and the terrorist would say: “OKAY. I will now take a step”. It took us three hours to clear the building—that was to come down nine flights. You can imagine how our nerves were at this stage. We had not slept for four nights, which, incidentally, was a great mistake which I never repeated again.

We finally got the terrorists and their hostages on the bus driving through streets that were filled with people who wanted to observe this action. The bus went to the tarmac. I didn't involve myself directly in the prisoners' exchange. I waited where our hostages would be released. The exchange was finally completed. They blew up their explosives—turned out that it was most, but not all. When I saw what a huge crater was made by the explosion, I was shocked; I hadn't realized the full extent of the power on the 9th floor just below us. I was glad that I had been ignorant. The terrorists let the hostages go, one by one, starting with the non-Americans. The last man out was Bob Stebbins, our consul whom we later found out from the other hostages had behaved with great courage and dignity. The plane flew off. The four official hostages, one of whom is now the present Japanese Ambassador to Washington, went with the plane to Libya. There they were released and returned to Kuala Lumpur. I must say, in conclusion, that Stebbins was badly treated by the Department. Just as he was being released, a newspaper man shouted a question at him. Stebbins answered by saying that at another time he would like to have coffee with his keepers and talk politics. That comment infuriated Henry Kissinger. Now the guy had been under tremendous pressure; he was after all the chief hostage. Everybody who had been a hostage paid high tribute to Stebbins for his leadership, steadiness, etc. But the damn State Department held his comment against him. I realized when he spoke that his remark was injudicious and I was sorry that he said it. I grabbed him, hugged him and told him not to say anything more. I rushed him to the car, but the damage was done. His comment was widely reported. When a few days later he went to Washington, he was stunned when Phil Habib, then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, bawled him out—on instructions, undoubtedly. It took me a long time to get over the bitterness of how Stebbins was treated; he was deeply wronged because his performance as a hostage had been an inspiration. It was very sad and insensitive how the Department behaved.

Later, typically, people came out to see the Embassy. We were chastised for not having taken sufficient security precautions. We turned Wayne Algire loose on the project—we called the Chancery “Fort Wayne” from then on. Less than a year later, we had another

group visit us from Washington. It represented the General Accounting Office. It criticized us severely for the “Fortress” we had built. I don't want to exaggerate this aspect; we just shrugged it off and accepted the irony of two bureaucracies, one condemning us for not locking up the Chancery and the other for doing so. What I really felt very strongly about was the treatment that Bob Stebbins received. In my eyes, he was a hero.

Q: As the hostage episode was winding down, were you continuing to get gratuitous advice and instructions from Washington?

DILLON: Indeed I was, but Al LaPorta, who was another kind of hero, was simply intercepting them and was smart enough, after a while, not even to give them to me. You may think that was dangerous; it would have been, except that Al was a smart, savvy Foreign Service officer who could be trusted to make the right judgements. So he didn't bother me with the unhelpful advice and that was good because we had enough on our minds. The problem was that in the Department there were people that were reacting to Henry Kissinger's strictures that we should never negotiate with terrorists. Apparently, he was quite concerned that I would do that. In fact, I wasn't, but I must admit that I have some reservations about the policy. The Japanese Minister of Transport became so angry at what he considered to be our negative attitude that, at one point, he refused to speak to me. That went on for about 36 hours. Murata, whom I mentioned earlier and who was then one of the Japanese involved in the negotiations and now the US Ambassador in Washington, picked up the communications slack and so he became our contact. In any case, the Japanese were very upset with us, even though we did give them some assistance, such as providing communication facilities. We can do that in a crisis. I found that interesting. The Department issued a very restrictive LIMITEL world wide in order to insure that our traffic went unimpeded. We communicated to Washington on a FLASH basis, so that we had instant communications with Washington and world-wide. We also had instant telephonic communications.

The USIS people did a good job. In a situation such as we had in Kuala Lumpur, you not only need to keep the Secretary of State advised, but also your USIS staff. In a hostage crisis, the town immediately fills up with newsmen. There are hundreds of calls from news organizations and from concerned people from all over the world. It is very important for the person in charge to get that public relations operations away from him or her as soon as possible. We put it in the USIS office. That staff took every incoming inquiry, except those that we received from the Department. They dealt with all the newsmen and media representatives. They shielded me from them. They performed very effectively. Unless you go through one of these experiences, you can't fully appreciate the contribution that a professional P.R. staff can make. We didn't have any instructions on this aspect of the incident. Somewhere in the Foreign Service manual, there was the beginning of a chapter on terrorism. It included a check list which was helpful. I began to appreciate check lists because, in truth, once an incident begins, you don't have time to make one up. You also don't have time in a crisis to pick up a thick manual and read about the philosophy of terrorism or Henry Kissinger's strong views about negotiations. What the leadership needs is a list of things that should not be overlooked. As I said, we fortunately had some of that.

The biggest mistake I made was not to set a duty roster to insure that everyone, including me, got sufficient sleep. After K.L in subsequent crises, that was one of the first things I did. I did not do that in K.L. because it always seemed that the crisis was about to end and then it would drag on for more time. I was so tired at the end of the four days that I literally couldn't see straight. I think everyone was in that same condition. We were absolutely exhausted and that was dangerous and I never repeated that mistake again.

Q: Let me just ask one more question about the terrorist episode. After it was over, and particularly when you returned to Washington, did you have the feeling that if anything would have gone wrong, it would have been viewed as your "fault"?

DILLON: I did indeed get that feeling. I should mention one other thing. When the K.L. crisis developed, a task force was established in Washington. It did good work. It was

very supportive. When it sent a message, it was always an encouraging one which was always helpful. It was the people at the top that were a problem. You do get the feeling that if things go awry, it is your fault. I don't know whether that is paranoia or whether it was just Mr. Kissinger in this case; it probably is just endemic to the way our government works: if things don't go well, it is your fault; if they go right, a lot of people take credit. We did in his case get a certain amount of credit. Everybody got a Superior Honor award; I got a piece of paper saying that I had done a great job. I was very glad to get it. But during the episode, I must say that I did not feel that I was getting much support from the top of the US government. You feel that everyone else is running for cover so that if something awful happens, they can distance themselves from catastrophe. I had the impression that at the top levels in Washington, where the ambitious people work, everyone was making it quite clear that whatever happened, he or she had done the right thing and that if matters went awry he or she could not be faulted. I had that same feeling during later incidents in which I was involved.

Q: We are now in 1991. I guess a current illustration of that attitude is what recently happened to Ambassador Glaspie in Baghdad when the Secretary of State and Washington in general distanced themselves in a hurry from her actions.

DILLON: If one of the hostages had been killed or something else had gone wrong, probably the Charge' in Kuala Lumpur would have been held responsible. Of course, when the incident was over and all had been settled satisfactorily, there were plenty of people who shared the accolades. I must say that your colleagues are fine in cases such as the K.L. one. It is at the higher levels that the problems begin. That comment covers both political appointees or career people who work with them. I was well treated after the K.L. incident; I got a nice telegram signed by Henry Kissinger which I may still have in my files. I don't assume that Kissinger wrote it, but I assume he signed it. The message said all the right things and was very complimentary of the staff. That staff had not been picked because of its expertise in terrorism; it was just a regular Foreign Service staff, but it was very good under very trying circumstances. Almost all of them acted almost automatically;

they didn't have to be told what to do. They just reacted and did what needed to be done. They adapted very quickly. I have named two or three of them already, but in all fairness, all had to be complimented. The communicators worked their tails off. I was on the 11th floor; they were on the 12th. We had emptied the 10th floor. The 9th floor soon became completely occupied by the terrorists. They occupied not only our half, but soon took the whole floor including the Swedish Chancery, manned by the Charge' and his secretary and probably one of their employees. Most of the hostages had come to the 9th floor for US consular business or were our employees or had been pulled off the elevators—some people had been trapped in the elevators. I don't remember why that last group was even in the building.

As I said, there was nothing special about our staff in K.L. A couple of them—Al LaPorta, for instance—were people whose subsequent careers demonstrated clearly that they were above average, but most of our staff were typical Foreign Service people. It just so happened that at the time, our two area specialists (Ambassador Underhill and Bennett, the Chief of the Political Section) were gone, Al LaPorta was the acting chief of the Political Section. The Station Chief had left only a few days before. His replacement arrived the day before the incident began. He was a good officer—sensible, professional. He didn't conspire to take over the show, as sometimes happens. He made it clear immediately that he and his resources were at my disposal. We discussed what could be done and the station played a role. The communication staff were typical common people and turned out to be absolutely superb. They never got excited. They worked around the clock, snoozing when they could. Three floors beneath them were many pounds of explosives placed in the walls; if anything had gone wrong, all the people from the 9th floor up at least were likely to be killed. That didn't seem to bother them. Algire was a very good security officer; he was probably above average and performed superbly. He didn't get excited; he was inventive and resourceful. For me at least, the picture of Wayne Algire on his back in that cramped space with a telephone cradled next to his ear, sweat pouring off of him as if he were in a stream, fiddling with those mysterious pieces, following the

instructions of the Chinese technician whom I never did see, making various attempts to get the equipment working again. He must have been there for an hour and a half or two hours. It wasn't an easy task. Then all of a sudden he announced that he thought the machine would work again. And it did! If I had had to do that, we'd probably still be there; I could never have figured it out.

That was K.L. and the highlight of my tour there. It happened in August 1975.

Q: What was the Malay reaction to the fall of Saigon which happened while you were there?

DILLON: It did particularly not upset the Malaysians. It upset us because many people in the Saigon Embassy were our friends and we saw pictures of them running for planes and helicopters. As far as Malaysians were concerned, Saigon was a long, long way away. They didn't have a feeling that the events in Vietnam would effect them. At an earlier time, there were Americans who saw Malaysia as part of the “domino chain” and threatened if Vietnam were to fall to the communists. But when it actually happened, the Malays did not feel threatened and I am not only referring to Viet Cong sympathizers. I am speaking of the broad population spectrum. Thailand was in between Vietnam and Malaysia. The Malaysians were gaining confidence as they managed to repress their own insurgency. It certainly didn't do American prestige any good and some of our people worried about that. If I had been an old Southeast Asian hand, I might have worried more. But I didn't.

The only thing that I remember of Malaysian strong reaction to foreign affairs—and I was very surprised by it—was an outpouring of emotion when Zhou En-lai died. I was always interested in China and had followed developments there as best I could. But I had never understood until that event the degree to which Zhou En-lai had become a hero among the “overseas” Chinese and others as well. I was just struck by the outpouring of emotion when Zhou passed away. He had at the end become the symbol of the “white hats' in

China as opposed to Mao and the Gang of Four. But the Malaysian reaction was an eye-opener to me.

I had been promoted to FSO-1 (now known as Minister-Counselor) at the end of my Kuala Lumpur tour. I was hoping for a good assignment, as one always does. My father died in 1977 and I went back to the US for the funeral and to help my mother. I took the opportunity to go to the Department to discuss my future. There was nothing definite. But as soon as I returned to K.L., I was notified that I had been assigned to the Senior Seminar. I was at first disappointed, then upon further reflection and after discussions with friends and people who knew about the Seminar, I became quite pleased. I began to think that I was very lucky and was looking forward to a year of “academic” pursuits.

Then I got a phone call from the Department, telling me that Ron Spiers had been named Ambassador to Turkey and had asked that I be assigned as his DCM. I agreed. Having said “Yes”, then came the rest of the story, about which I had not asked. I would have to go to Ankara on direct transfer and immediately because Spiers could not get to Ankara for several months and Ambassador Macomber had to leave immediately. Don Bergus, who was then the DCM, had been nominated as Ambassador to The Sudan and would have to leave very soon. So the negotiations started because I wanted to return to the US for personal reasons. It was pointed out to me that I had just been in the States for my father's funeral; what more time did I need? So in June, Sue and I and the two children who were still with us packed up, got on an airplane and flew directly to Tehran where we had to change planes. We spent a night and a morning in Tehran. This was June, 1977. Jack Miklos, the DCM, was kind enough to invite us to stay a few hours with him. That gave us the opportunity to see the famous American Embassy compound in Tehran. Bill Sullivan had just arrived as Ambassador and I had the opportunity to chat with him a little, mainly about Southeast Asia from where he had also just come (he had been our Ambassador in the Philippines). Then we went on to Ankara.

When we reached Ankara, we found Ambassador Macomber dying to leave. I spent 72 hours with him; he never stopped talking during that whole period. A lot of what he had to say was interesting and important, but it was exhausting. Bill is very hyper; I felt well briefed by the time he got finished. Bill left and I became Charge' for two-three months until Ron Spiers arrived. Spiers was new to the area. He was a politico-military expert. He had been Ambassador in the Bahamas and the DCM in London; so he had some overseas experience. He was essentially a Departmental type, but a very bright and very nice man. I liked him a lot. We had a comfortable relationship. It was different from Malaysia where as I have already mentioned, I did not get involved in substance very much because I was not the area expert that the Ambassador and the Chief of the Political Sections were. They really knew the country and I didn't. But in Ankara it was different; I was the country expert. So my role was somewhat different. While I functioned as the executive Officer—the standard DCM role—, I was much more involved in politics.

Q: But isn't that a dangerous position to be in? That is to say, to be the Number 2 and yet have more knowledge and connections than the Ambassador?

DILLON: Yes, it is. The normal DCM position is the better one to be in, as was true in Kuala Lumpur. There we had an Ambassador who knew the country and the issues well, who had great charm and was well liked by the Malaysians. I did the “inside” work. That is the better situation. In Ankara, it didn't work that way; on the other hand, Spiers was such a good professional and a good manager (despite some of the criticisms that were made of his stewardship as Under Secretary for Management later on, especially some of his personnel policies) that we turned out to be happy combination. I did get involved in many substantive issues. I did try to exploit my contacts which were still numerous. After all, I had already served in Turkey for seven years. Ron himself was so secure as a person that he was not bothered at all that I knew Turkey so well. I could well imagine working for an Ambassador who would be upset by a situation in which the DCM was a well known figure in the country, but Ron was not at all. Furthermore, the Turks have a very strict sense of

hierarchy. Whereas Americans might handle a situation as we had in Ankara badly, the Turks never would. They knew who the boss was and they behaved that way, even though I knew many of the senior officials personally. I did exploit that personal relationship to a correct degree; it was essentially for information gathering purposes. I do not believe that Ron ever felt that I was trying to up-stage him; I certainly didn't and I think he recognized that. But as a general management principle, I would side with an Embassy organization which had an Ambassador who was the area expert and the DCM who was the manager. The Malaysian model was the correct one because it also had the Chief of the Political Section as another country expert. You need a couple of Section Chiefs who know the territory.

Q: During the 1977-80, what were the major issues the Embassy had to deal with?

DILLON: First of all there was the opium poppy problem. Turkey was a major supplier of these narcotics. One other major problem concerned the embargo that the US Congress had placed on assistance to Turkey as the result of the 1974 Cyprus invasion. Another issue that created tension between the two governments related to the Americans still in jail. Although that issue may not have been as important in terms of our national interests as the Cyprus one, nevertheless these imprisonments were very sensitive because many Congressmen became involved as the relatives put pressure on their representatives and senators to take some action. Every American prisoner had two Senators and one Representative; their relatives had other representation. I was always amazed by the number of requests for information and action we used to receive from Congress.

Ron Spiers felt very strongly that the embargo had to be lifted. He felt that the US could not pursue its other interests in Turkey without that action. After he had been in Ankara for six-eight months, he decided to return to Washington to see what he could do about changing Congressional views. He did not have confidence that the people in the Department, who were responsible for Congressional relations, were putting enough effort into the lifting of the embargo. Ron was superb in handling Congress. He had a nice direct,

no nonsense style; he didn't pester or hector—no histrionics or flamboyance. He was very credible. He told me later that he had personally talked to two hundred Congressmen and Senators—an extraordinary number. So I had extended periods of being Charge' in Turkey while my Ambassador was in Washington lobbying. I thoroughly enjoyed being Charge'. It is a pretty good situation; if you want to, you can duck a situation—"The Ambassador is not here and this has to wait until he returns". On the other hand, if you want to make a difference on a certain issue, you can insert yourself. It is not a bad situation to find oneself in. So I had long periods of being Charge' and it helped me to learn a lot about being the senior official at an Embassy.

On the question of the embargo, I was the lead officer at the Embassy while Ron was in Washington. The lifting of the sanctions required some actions on the part of the Turks and I was responsible for conducting negotiations with them on this issue. They were not easy to deal with. While Macomber was still Ambassador, the Administration had been defeated in Congress on the issue, despite making a major effort. I am convinced that what finally got the embargo lifted was the result of Ron's efforts—and those of some others—another vote had been scheduled in Congress. Key members had been convinced to vote for the lifting of the embargo, but there was still strong opposition from some powerful members such as Sarbanes and Brademas. It was strange because on other issues, Sarbanes and his group tended to vote in favor of our positions. I am a great admirer of Sarbanes, except on issues that related to the Greek-Turkey conflict where I think he was inflexible. A conversation with Sarbanes on a Greek-Turkey issue is more like a grilling; I had had several of those inquisitions. Ron was more successful in handling Sarbanes.

In any case, as Congress was heading for another vote, the Greek and Cyprus governments became very concerned about the potential Congressional decision. They wanted to insure that the embargo remained in effect. Kyprianou, then the President of Cyprus, announced that he would fly to Washington to personally oppose the lifting of the embargo. He had been encouraged to do so by some of his Greek-American friends. Spiers immediately recognized that this would work in our favor; I also recognized that

in the first place, it is a high risk game for foreigners to go to Washington to lobby on their own behalf (The Israelis seem to do it and get away with it, but not many others find it a successful strategy) and in the second place, Kyprianou was an obnoxious bore. He was totally lacking in charm; when charm was passed out, most Greeks got a lot of it; Kyprianou none. I am not sure whose idea it was to encourage Kyprianou to go to Washington, but it was certainly welcomed by Ron and those of us who wanted to have the embargo lifted. We were delighted by the prospect of Kyprianou's visit. We wanted his allies to encourage him to go; we felt he could do more for us than we could do for ourselves. I am absolutely convinced that he turned all the “fence sitters” in our favor. It became very clear to the Congressmen that he was unreasonable, emotional and irrational. Many of them suddenly became aware that the Turks who lived on Cyprus might have had a reasonable case and may have had a legitimate reason to separate themselves from the Greek-Cypriot government. So in a very close vote, the embargo was lifted. Ron returned to Ankara where by this time he had been Ambassador for about eighteen months.

He then went to work on some other issues, including negotiations on a treaty for prisoners' exchanges. I participated in that, although the real negotiators were teams of Washington staffers. That treaty allowed prisoners in the respective countries to complete their term back in their home country. It was essentially a fig-leaf which permitted the Turks to release the American prisoners they held which had become such a great international political liability to them. By this time, the whole issue had become a Turkish domestic issue. Every true Turkish patriot was primed to stand up and scream about Turkish sovereignty and about favoritism for American prisoners. The anti-American stand was supported strongly by those who resented the pressure we were placing on the Turkish government on the poppy growing issue. The two issues became somehow engaged in people's minds and in many cases, one became an excuse for inaction on the other.

In any case, all the Americans were let out of jail. I remember going down to the Adana jail where there were just three left. These were kids who had been foolish, stupid, had behaved arrogantly—had done all the wrong things. They had matured in prison. The Adana jail is a terrible prison, perhaps no worse than some American jails, but it is not a place where you or anyone close to you would want to spend any time. It was divided politically between left and right. There were a lot of local terrorists in this jail. Many of the prisoners belonged either to a right wing or a left wing group and had to be kept separated. The three Americans had to occupy neutral territory. I went into the jail and talked to them. They were brave and dignified. I hadn't realized how sentimental a person I really was. When it came time for me to leave, they were very composed and amazingly cheerful and wanted me to understand that they appreciated the efforts of the US government. When I heard that, I started to cry. I stood in that miserable prison, tears streaming down my cheeks. Eventually, the three were released and I think they have had productive lives. Although this issue of the prisoners didn't sound like a big deal, as a matter of fact, it was.

Q: It was a big deal. In fact, in some ways, that is what we Americans are all about. American interests aren't always about that we have enough oil, but we do care about protecting our fellow Americans, even if they have behaved stupidly.

DILLON: These kids obviously had “sinned” but they had paid. I think, interestingly enough, they were also rehabilitated. When I saw them they were probably in their late '20s, having been in jail for a few years; they were no longer the silly, “hippy” types that they were when they were originally apprehended.

Q: Let me ask you to discuss the Kurdish problem during this period. Was the phrase “Mountain Turk” used to describe the Kurds?

DILLON: I never heard it used in Turkey although some Turks claimed it was the government's official term. I think some American journalists described the Kurds that way in sort of a sardonic fashion. But I never heard the phrase in Turkey. The Kurds

were discussed in Turkish circles, even though some found it difficult to mention the subject. Interestingly enough, politicians had no reservations at all about telling you what they thought of the Kurds. Turkish politicians have one thing in common with Americans: a tremendous sensitivity to ethnic politics and the need to balance electoral lists representative of all ethnic groups. So every politician was keenly aware of the ethnic break-down of his own province. Starting from the early "60s, I never found any inhibition —with the exception of the Foreign Ministry perhaps—in discussing the ethnic issues— Kurds and other minorities. You quickly found yourself talking about Cherkez, to a much lesser degree, Azeris, Alawites. The word “minority” had a special meaning and was used in connection with the Lausanne Treaty when Christian—Greek and Armenian—minorities were specifically listed in the Treaty. So to a Turkish government official particularly, the word “minority” didn't have the generalized meaning that it has to us. It meant those specific groups listed in the Treaty to whom the government owed certain obligations. But this issue was not very important in Turkey and the role of the small Christian minorities was seldom raised. Perhaps one heard the role of a “minority” discussed in Istanbul because they were interwoven with the history of the city, but in Ankara, weeks would go by without a mention of these minorities because people just didn't think about them.

But the Kurds were different. There are two levels at which discussions of Kurds took place: 1) the problems in Eastern Turkey with tribal Kurds; 2) politicians especially would also talk about the hundreds of thousands of integrated Kurds in Turkish cities—Istanbul and Ankara being the main locations. So if you talked to politicians or, on rare occasion to policemen, they would tell you which neighborhoods were Kurdish. Most outsiders would not have known because the Kurds in these neighborhoods spoke Turkish, were Sunni Muslims and were not subjected to any obvious discrimination. Indeed all government organizations had Kurds in them. Now it is generally acknowledged that at least 20% of the Turkish population is Kurdish. When I was in Turkey, 10% was the figure being used, even though there were people in the American Embassy who felt that the number was far larger than 10%. You have to remember that the period of the late "70s was politically

very violent culminating in September 1980 with a military crack-down. For the few years preceding that, there was a lot of political violence, terrorism—a lot of left-right combat. That was very disturbing to the Turks who are rather conservative and law and order oriented. It is interesting to note that the only widespread violence was political in origin; there were some other kinds of violence, but none with the fervor and extent of political one.

The violence was always explained in ideological terms. There were people who called themselves Maoists. Plain ordinary communists were considered almost conservative. During this period, any idea that some Turks were inspired in any way by the Soviet example is nonsense. Whatever revolutionary appeal Soviet communism may have had in the "60s, was gone by the late "70s. By this time, no one was interested in the Soviet experiment; it was clearly irrelevant. These were Turkish revolutionaries, although people were misled by the use they made of Marxist vocabulary and symbolism. I am not trying to denigrate “Marxism”, but its use in Turkey in the late "70s was just plain misleading. They had to talk about “revolution”, but it did not have the same significance of years earlier.

But back to the Kurds. There were a large number of Kurds in Turkey's leftist groups. I suppose the motivation was nationalistic as well as ideological. I can remember some of the famous and bloody incidents, in Istanbul in particular, although not exclusively. There were some gangs of younger men that police were looking for. It was noticeable that, although the papers never referred to them as Kurds, their nicknames were such as “Kochero”—meaning “eagle” in Kurdish. Many of the nicknames ended in “o” which suggested Kurdish origin. There was also an incident in an Istanbul suburb when the police surrounded an apartment building in which some of these young men were holed up. The police commented that the young people were talking a “foreign” language, which was actually Kurdish. But in general, the Turks were correct and smart in not generalizing about revolution and Kurdishness, even though, as I said, a lot of the young men belonging to revolutionary groups were Kurdish.

Q: That sounds somewhat akin to the United States where much of the leftist and Marxist leadership came from Jewish ranks, but it is not mentioned because we don't want something going. Is that a parallel analogy?

DILLON: Maybe. The interesting aspect is that it was certainly widely understood because it was not as if someone had to go around telling everybody that it was dangerous to mix ethnic issues and ideology. An awful lot of Turks seemed to understand it. There was no direct censorship on the issue but in newspaper accounts, there almost never was any identification of national origin of leftists. It was clearly very dangerous to link Kurds and leftists. It was especially true that no one wanted to call attention to the fact that among the integrated Kurds, who were, for the lack of a better phrase, “loyal Turkish citizens”, were some leftist revolutionaries. No one wanted to raise that specter. The Turkish policy for a long time had been one of assimilation, which as I get older, I don't find a bad policy. In Turkish life, I believe, there is absolutely no barrier to Kurds who speak Turkish and who are Sunni Muslims. If you don't speak Turkish or if you speak it with such a thick eastern accent that no one can understand or if for some reason you are a member of a religious minority—i.e. non Sunni Muslims—, then there were barriers to moving up in society. They were not written, but they existed. But the integrated Kurds didn't have those problems and I don't believe that most Turks viewed Kurds in western Turkey as subversive or enemies.

Q: Did the terrorism stem from the University or did it have its source elsewhere?

DILLON: I thought that it might have started around the Universities. To say that it came out of the Universities would not be accurate, but around the Universities there were a lot of poor young men living in miserable conditions. Turkish Universities are like European Universities; they are nothing like American Universities. They were large, urban, impersonal institutions with little or no campus life. In the cities, there were large dormitories which are not connected with the Universities. So you get a large concentration of students, particularly young activist males, who live in these dormitories. The dormitories became factional headquarters; they became segregated and battle

grounds between the leftists and the rightists. The rightists were almost 99% pure Turks; the leftists were more mixed, but a lot of them were Kurds. Then there was a large middle group of students who were trying to avoid the factional fighting altogether. The parents of course were very worried and encouraged their children not to live in these dormitories. Within the Universities, there were radical professors who promoted their ideology. I don't think one can clearly paint the professors as espousing violence, but Maoist philosophy had a radical chic in those days. They were influenced by Europeans as always. If you want to know what is going on in Turkey's ideological spectrum, go to Paris and you will see Turkey a few years hence. A few years before my period in Turkey, there was a well advertised Paris student scene. The Turkish professors had an exposure to that leftist student drive and over a period of time, brought it to Turkey. It was chic in Europe for many years to be anti-American; that also spread to Turkey. That period has fortunately passed and we are no longer the issue we used to be. Our overwhelming presence, at least in the eyes of many young Turks, contributed to this. So the leftist movement became enmeshed with anti-Americanism. In 1979 and 1980, Americans became direct targets. During my last year in Turkey, something like eight Americans were killed. They were either G.I.s or civilians who worked for the military. There were murders in both Istanbul and Ankara; that was very disturbing to all of us.

Q: Did you feel that the Turkish government had some control over the situation or did you feel somewhat isolated?

DILLON: I didn't really feel either of those. It was clear that the Turkish government did not have control of the situation. The government was alternating between Demirel and Ecevit. They detested each other; could never cooperate. So in effect Turkey had weak governments with Ecevit heading leftist governments and Demirel heading up rightist ones. Neither man was an extremist, particularly Demirel was essentially a centrist. Ecevit is not an extreme leftist, but somewhat of a romantic and very much influenced by what he saw as a European social-democratic movement.

The government was paralyzed. Police and security forces were “rightists”, if one can use such term. That was a point that the left made over and over again. It was a pattern that happened in other places. You don't tend to find leftist police forces in most countries. In Istanbul particular, you could claim that the Laz dominated the police force. The Laz also dominated the criminal class. They were all rightists. The government, as I said, was paralyzed. There was no good way to deal with terrorism. What you had were young men, who were not from traditionally lower-classes—some of very humble origins, some not—and therefore very difficult to pin point. We had some of the same syndrome in Turkey as we have in the United States. Huge waves of protests when the police beat up the children of middle class citizens. We had Turkish families genuinely very upset and concerned about violence. They were concerned about safety, but on the other hand were also very critical of the security forces. The government was not very effective in handling this situation. There may have been people in Washington who thought that the Turkish leftist movement was inspired and supported from outside the borders. That was nonsense. None of us in the country believed that at all. We were convinced that these movements were very much home grown. There was no scintilla of evidence that the Iranians, the Arabs or anyone else were involved. It was the Turks and the Kurds. The government, as I said, handled the situation badly. A lot of traditional police methods do not work. The police would be given a name, would apprehend the individual immediately and beat him badly. Then they would get other names and follow the same procedure. That would generate other names and so went the process. In a few days, they would have a large number of young men locked up. They had no time for careful investigation to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The Turks, by this time, had gotten the idea that the Jews were important politically in the United States and undoubtedly exaggerated that perception, but they always made a point about the very special position that the Sephardic Jews had in Turkey. I am not sure that at the popular level, people cared much one way or another. There was not much anti-Semitism in Turkey; it was not like Europe where you have that traditional, Christian-based

anti-Jewishness. In Turkey, the only symptoms I observed were Turks pandering to what they believed to be a foreigner's view. You can say that of the Arab world as well. You occasionally get people who assume that because you are an American Protestant, that you must to some degree be anti-Jewish, which is nonsense. It was a kind of pandering statement. But I don't think anti-Jewishness is deeply rooted in the Turkish culture.

At another level, the Turks—and we are seeing that today as the newspapers celebrate the 500th anniversary of the large Sephardic migration from Spain and Portugal to Turkey—make a big thing about the Jews among them. That, of course, is for western consumption, but I don't think I ever witnessed anything that suggested that the Sephardic Jews were suffering from discrimination.

I am sorry to say that if any minority suffered from discrimination, it was the Greeks. I have been very annoyed over the years by the constant Greek obsession with the Turks. Whenever I would go to Greece, people would ask me how I could live in that “savage country”. I didn't like that. On the other hand Istanbul Greeks did suffer from discrimination.

The honeymoon between the Turks and the Americans ended in the late '50s. From then on, Americans were scape-goated and blamed for all kinds of things. The Turks became very suspicious of Americans. The Cyprus affair really galvanized this feeling. There was a tremendous animus against Greeks whenever something was going on Cyprus. There is a free, popular press in Turkey and even though there were some taboos—e.g. discussing Kurds, critical treatment of Ataturk—and therefore some self-censorship, there was no inhibition on the discussion of Greeks. Huriyet, a major newspaper with a circulation of over a million readers by the time I left Turkey, which was commercially very successful with offset presses and color picture, would beat the Cyprus-Greece problem to death. Even the more intellectual newspapers, like the Cumhuriyet and Milliyet would take the same approach. They would also treat the Cyprus issue in very xenophobic terms. The composition of the staff on those papers were important elements in Turkish political life. Sami Kohen, who is still the foreign writer of Milliyet, and a stringer for major American

newspapers—in fact, I see his byline a lot in the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, but he writes for others as well, goes often by the name of Sam Cohen and he is a Sephardic Jew. Abdi Ipekci, who was murdered by a Turkish rightist, was the premier Turkish newsman of his time, was a donme and a very Turkish nationalist in addition. The minority picture in Turkey is complex and multi-level.

The Turks should have done years ago the things for the Kurds that they say they are willing to do now in cultural and economic matters. It may be too late, but if they had done them thirty years ago, they might have been successful. Now they are willing to let people speak Kurdish and are discussing letting Kurds have some cultural identity, but it may be too late.

The other minorities are interesting, but politically insignificant; the Turkish record is not bad on minority treatment. When one says that, one is immediately tagged as an “apologist”, but in fact their record is not bad. They used the old “Millet” system which worked for many years, although towards the end it was far from perfect. In effect, the Turks left people in the hands of their own religious authorities. That was one of the reasons why in the early days, the Turks were welcomed as liberators and why many, many people converted to Islam. It was not because the Turks were holding knives to their throats, but because they wanted to get away from their own authorities. Surely there a large number of people in modern Turkey who, although Sunni Muslims, are the descendants of Greek and Armenian ancestors, who voluntarily converted to Islam. Christians sometimes like to believe that the conversions were forced, but in fact they weren't; it may have happened occasionally, but not as a rule. The Arabs converted people forcefully sometimes, but that was not the Turkish style.

Q: There were two outside events that occurred while you were in Turkey. One was the convulsion in Iran (the take over of our Embassy in Tehran) and the invasion of Afghanistan. How were these viewed by our Embassy in Ankara?

DILLON: The Iran situation was viewed with mounting horror, to say the least. The Turks were greatly concerned. There is a sense that Iran is an awfully long way away from Turkey, even though the two countries have a contiguous border. But the heart of Turkey, which is Western Turkey, where most of the population dwells, is separated from Iran by eastern Turkey, which was largely Kurdish and then across the border, in Iran, is the province of Azerbaijan which is populated by people of Turkish descent and more Kurds. The heartland of Turkey and the heartland of Iran are a long way apart. These two countries never really felt like neighbors.

The Turks of course had modernized much more quickly than the Iranians. They were concerned by a reactionary movement which was religiously driven and led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. That was horrifying to them. The Turkish press and popular opinion in general was very anti-Khomeini. Undoubtedly, there were individuals who supported the revolution, but on the whole the prospect was not pleasing to the Turks. There was no great upsurge of religious fervor. There had been for sometime a lot of pandering in the political parties to Islam. Pandering to Islam by secular politicians is a hell of a lot different than having religious leaders who emerge as political leaders. In Turkey, there was a party called the Salvation Party, headed by Erbakan, which was outrageous in its pandering to Islam. They ended up at one point with 12% or 13% of the vote, but this was nothing like Iran. Erbakan and his deputy, Korkut Ozal, who was a brother of Turgut Ozal, who later became Prime Minister, were essentially secular leaders. But Erbakan is still in political life in Turkey today. He is an absolute fraud. If he were in the United States, he would be a TV evangelist with a scandal surrounding him, but with a pocket full of money. Many Turks were worried not only because of the nature of Iran's revolution, but wondered whether the Soviets would take advantage of it or what other events might be triggered by Khomeini's assumption of power. There was a good deal of sympathy among the Turks for the refugees from Iran. It is worth recording that they were well treated. The official Turkish position was to close the border to people without entry permits; on the other hand, if one managed to cross the border, the refugees were taken care of. The

Turks were very helpful to fleeing Americans. There were a number of cases of Americans who got close to the border and made a run for it and as soon as they had reached Turkish territory, they were protected and assisted.I should mention that we monitored communication channels. One of those was the Iranian Embassy in Ankara. After the revolution, the Iranian Ambassador fled. The Embassy was taken over by what was called the “students committee”, although the diplomatic staff remained in place. Reading the Iranian communications was appalling because they were so clearly pandering to the religious nuts back in Tehran. If Tehran formed its world views based on the information from its Embassies, it was totally misled because the reports from Ankara, for example, suggested that Turkey was on the edge of a major religious upheaval. It simply wasn't true. There were all sorts of misleading reports from the Iranian Embassy in Ankara. I found it difficult to believe that the reporting officers believed the misinformation they were filing; on the other hand, people often find what they are looking for and they may have found some evidence to support their arguments. The Iranians were not very sophisticated about their communications, so that we routinely read probably everything they sent home that was allegedly political reporting and commentary. On one level it was funny; on another it was frightening. I sat there thinking that if these messages reflected their views of Turkey, how misled were the Iranians about other countries?

I left in August, 1980. At that time, the Turks were still trying to digest what was happening in Tehran. Our people had not been released from their “quarters” in Tehran. The Turks were very helpful to us since they had still a functioning Embassy in Tehran. Also, particularly through Azerbaijanis, the Turks had pretty good reporting. They were very sensitive that the Iranians not see them as reporting to the Americans; on the other hand, they would brief us very carefully and seriously on what they were being told. They would report to us information about the hostages. At one time, there were some hopes that the Turks might be helpful in resolving the hostage crisis. Publicly, the Turks said very little about Iran. They were smart enough not to get caught up in a public debate. I remember meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Iran when he returned from Tehran.

He didn't want to make a big thing about meeting with me; in fact, I think I had to go to Istanbul to see him. We spent some hours together talking about the Tehran scene and his views. The Turkish Foreign Ministry is quite good. This Ambassador was very good in his analysis. His views were well documented and balanced. He had obviously kept up his contacts and was quite familiar with what was going on. I took notes and wrote up a lengthy report.

The Turks would also on occasion share with me information they received from their border post at Maku. That covered events in such places as Tabriz. There was nothing secret about it, but it was good reporting. It became clear to me in the course of these debriefings that the Turks had a pretty good network of informants among ethnic groups in Iran. I don't know how things developed in the '80s. I assume that the Turks continued their attempts to maintain decent relations with Iran; that would be absolutely characteristic of the way they would operate. What they thought privately was irrelevant; they would make an effort to maintained good and normal relationships. The Turks are status quo minded; they don't want any questions about borders; they want good relations with their neighbors. They don't want to feel threatened.

As far as Afghanistan was concerned, the Turks always had a thing about that country. After Ataturk became President, one of the few places outside of Turkey that he became involved in was Afghanistan. Until the late "60s, there were Turkish military instructors in Kabul. I remember meeting the Afghan Ambassador who had defected to Turkey in the "70s. He had been a former Afghan military officer who had gone to Yildiz, the large Turkish military staff college in Istanbul. So the relationship between the Turks and the Afghan had been close for many years. The Turks became a little sentimental about the Afghans perhaps because they were so far away that they didn't create any threat whatsoever. The Turks had attachments to strange little places. Albania was another one partly for historical and cultural reasons. They had a similar attachment to the Afghans. They viewed these little countries as friendly and as culturally related. So the Turks reacted very negatively to the communist revolution and the Soviet invasion

of Afghanistan. Even among the intellectuals, Russian communism was passe' and the events in Kabul did not find much appeal in Turkey.

At the popular level, the fear of the Russians still existed. The Afghan events reinforced the views of those who believed that the Soviet Union offered a threat. The Soviet invasion may have discredited the left to a small extent. It strengthen the right, particularly a man like Turkesh, who was viewed as the chief secular rightist as opposed to the religious rightists. He could cite Afghanistan as evidence that he had been right all along. Incidentally, Turkesh now cites the emergence of the Turkish republics in Central Asia as proof that his earlier views were right. There is a lot of racism involved in the views of these rightists. They are a minority. I doubt whether they make up more than five percent of the political active Turks. They are a strange little minority with strange racists views, even though the Turks, of all people, are immensely mixed. Racism doesn't make sense in any context, but it certainly makes even less sense in a country as mixed as Turkey.

Q: How did our policy of negativism of the Afghan invasion play in Turkey? How did they view our cancellation of participation in the Olympics, for example?

DILLON: I can't remember how the Turks responded. The Turks are never enthusiastic about that kind of gesture. But it would be dangerous for me to say that they didn't respond. The Turks were pretty good at keeping things like Olympics out of politics. They are not a big Olympic power; there are only a few events, like wrestling and weight-lifting—traditional Turkish sports—, that really interested them. They were good at keeping sports and politics separate. A lot would have depended on whether they wanted to please us, but I don't really recall their reaction.

The big issue between the Turks and us at the time was the opium traffic—its cultivation and smuggling—and our exaggerated view that the Turks were responsible for heroin coming into the United States. So the Turkish reaction to Afghan events was undoubtedly guided by their views of what would play better with our Congress. This period was also

one during which we had just gotten the military assistance embargo lifted—the one that was invoked after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

Q: You were in Turkey essentially for the whole Carter administration. That regime emphasized "human rights". You have already discussed that situation in Turkey as you saw it from Ankara. How were the Embassy's relationships with the Bureau for Human rights in the State Department?

DILLON: The Bureau of Human Rights was just getting under way when I left for Turkey. I remember better what the Embassy-Bureau relationships were when I was in Cairo because by that time that Bureau had become a power-house. I do remember reporting on the human right issue from Turkey. We were mainly preoccupied by the issue of police brutality. The Turkish police were brutal. I am not rising to their defense by saying that they are probably no more brutal than the French, who are awful; the Greeks were pretty bad. The Turkish police was essentially the same as others. They are poorly educated, poorly trained, poorly paid; they come primarily from lower classes. I have earlier described their investigating technique. There were allegations of abuse of some of the women that were arrested. I obviously don't know the truth of those allegations, but I don't have reasons to disbelieve the allegations.

Political freedom was pretty well established in Turkey by the late ''70s. The Army assumed power again in 1980 and was repressive for several years. A lot of the "Amnesty International" allegations about Turkey stemmed from the period following the Army coup, starting particularly in the Fall of 1980 and for the following three years. The Army was fairly brutal in its repression. The left was crushed and it was from that process that many allegations of human right violations stemmed. While I was there, there wasn't very much of that. For example, it was very difficult for people in the United States to believe that the American prisoners in Turkish jails were not mistreated; in fact, they were not.

The Hayes case is interesting. I have already described it. It was a tricky matter. There were Turks who understood that Billy Hayes was a political embarrassment and that Turkey would be better off if he were released. On the other hand, so much ado had been made about the whole narcotics issue that a number of Turks felt that it would be very unpopular for the government to do anything for Hayes. The sad thing that happened—and I think this is what got Americans upset—was that there was an appeal filed. In our system, in an appeal process, you can't be punished more than the original sentence; you may get relief, but you can not be punished further. The Turks use the European system which permits a complete re-evaluation of the case if an appeal is made. So, in Hayes' case, the appeal process resulted in a doubling of the original sentence. That really evoked outrage in the United States in part because of the lack of understanding of the differences between the two systems. In Turkey, cases and appeals are heard by a panel of judges (no juries), who are employees of the state (the Ministry of Justice). They are supposed to be graduates of the law schools. The system is copied essentially after the Italian model. The criminal justice system was a copy of the Italian system; the commercial law was modeled after the Swiss. In any case, the Turkish legal process came under American scrutiny and many Americans became very upset by it.

I remember reading a good article in the NEW YORKER magazine which pointed out how dishonest the movie about Billy Hayes' Midnight Express was. In an interview the director, Oliver Stone said that the movie was not about Turkey, but rather about “violence”. It was simple sophistry. It was a movie about Turkey and was seen as such. At the end of the movie, there was an attempt made to portray it as factual by adding a statement that as result of the Hayes incident, the Turks and the Americans had signed a treaty for exchange of prisoners. It is true that such a treaty was signed; I helped to negotiate it. But that was the result of neither the book, nor the movie, not the Hayes case itself; the idea had been under discussion for a long time. It had a lot to do with some prisoners in the Adana jail. In any case, I hope Billy made a lot of money and repaid his parents.

The filming of the Midnight Express was done in two different ways. Some was done in a Turkish bazaar with a hand held camera. The rest was filmed in Malta, around buildings that looked vaguely like Istanbul. The extras were Turkish speaking people, but if you listened carefully, you could detect a thick Greek accent on most of them. You could imagine the Turkish reaction! They saw a movie which denigrates them and their country. The movie painted a very dismal picture of Turks; then to have the actors speak with a Greek accent, really outraged them. They felt victimized. But a movie that pretends to be factual should be just that; it wasn't.

Q: Now let me move to your next assignment which took place in 1980 when you were appointed as the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) in Cairo. How did that come about?

DILLON: While in Turkey, I became intrigued by the idea of serving in the Arab world. We used to vacation in Beirut, had driven through Jordan and had visited Syria a couple of times. I was supposed to stay in Ankara for four years, but in the summer of 1980, after three years on that tour and a total ten years in Turkey, I felt that if an opportunity for change came along, I should take it. I went to Berlin for a conference on drugs. Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo, was present. He was one of our most respected envoys. In true Foreign service fashion, I let it be known that I would be available for reassignment in the summer of 1980. Very shortly thereafter, I got a telephone call saying that the DCM in Cairo would be leaving and that Roy would like me as the replacement. I was flattered. Cairo was then, and may still be, the largest Embassy in the world. So the idea really appealed to me. It was made clear to me that I was not offered the position because of my great knowledge of either Egypt or the Arab world, but that Roy needed help in trying to run the Embassy which had a large AID mission and a growing Military Assistance staff. He didn't need any help on the substantive side. I liked the idea. I think I had become somewhat of a manager in Turkey, although there I also considered myself knowledgeable of the substance since I had devoted so many years to Turkish affairs. I suggested to Roy that he touch base with Jim Spain (who had replaced Spiers as

Ambassador), who was kind enough to act disappointed, but said that he understood. Fortunately, I had a replacement in mind, which is always very useful if you are trying to make an exit from an assignment. I knew that Dick Boehm, who was then the DCM in Nepal, was ready to move on. Dick is a truly outstanding officer who had been the pol-mil officer in Ankara at one time and was therefore familiar with Turkey. Spain liked the idea, so everything worked out well. Jim and I have remained very close friends. Roy invited me to come to Cairo to look the situation over and to talk to him, which I did. I had never been in Egypt, but was intrigued with spending some time there. During that trip, I had an opportunity to talk to Freeman Matthews, who was then the DCM. I got an idea of what the job entailed. So a direct transfer was arranged, which was accompanied by a week's consultation in Washington. Some of my friends told me that in career terms I was making a mistake taking a third tour as DCM. I had been a DCM at a very large mission and I should have sat tight awaiting an Ambassadorial appointment. Like all Foreign Service officers, I always wanted to be an Ambassador, but I was really not hungering for it at that time. At this point of my career, I thought that eventually I would be offered a post of my own. I couldn't think of any way of hastening it. It did occur to me that my friends might have been right. On the other hand, ten years of Greeks, Turks and Cypriots, was enough. One gets burned out after a while; it is very hard to be patient, but a Foreign Service officer must be that. I thought that one more conversation with a Greek or a Turk explaining the sins of the other might have driven me over the edge.

Cairo is Cairo. It is a mess. It is a difficult city to live in, but it is one of the most interesting cities in the world. There is a certain Egyptian style with which one becomes readily acquainted. They have a famous sense of humor. They can poke fun at themselves, which is not common in the Arab world or the eastern Mediterranean. The Egyptians have a self-deprecating sense of humor, which is very appealing to Americans.

I went to Cairo on direct transfer, as I said. Roy and I had never discussed tenure, but I assumed that I was going for a long term. The DCM had a very nice house in Cairo, which had a history. It was owned by the Department of Agriculture, which had obtained it

when a lot of local currency had been generated through the sale of American agricultural surpluses. The Department used these revenues to buy up real estate. So this house was out in Maadi, and had been used by the head of our “Interest” section, which was part of the Swiss Embassy when we did not have diplomatic relations with the Egyptians. It was nice to have a comfortable and attractive place to live. There had been some attempts made by the Department of Agriculture for the return of the house, which claimed that it had been essentially stolen from them by State Department. There was a school nearby which was used by the child who was still with us—the other four had gone off to college or beyond. My wife got a job teaching at the school.

My inclination in situations like this is to assume that I would be in the job for a long time. My tendency therefore was to hold off on things a visitor to a place like Egypt might have done and to concentrate very much on business at hand. Fortunately, my wife was smarter and had learned that life takes sharp turns sometimes. She insisted that we do all the things that tourists do and so we traveled up the Nile, to the Pyramids and other sightseeing tours. On Fridays particularly, which were holidays in Egypt as they are in all Muslim countries, we would walk in the old parts of Cairo. The week-end in Cairo consisted of Friday and Sunday. We used Ambassador Dick Parker's book, which I recommend highly, about walking tours through old Cairo.

President Sadat was still alive. Soon after my arrival, Roy took me to meet him. Roy was very good and assiduous in getting me to meet the senior officials of the Egyptian government, so that when he was gone, people would know who I was. Mubarak, then the Vice President and now President, and a couple of his staff members were people to whom I had ready access. That was very useful. There was a group there headed by Sol Linowitz pursuing autonomy talks, following the Camp David agreements. He was assisted by Jim Leonard and Wat Cluverius. This group was in and out of Egypt; it had apartments in town, but it shuttled back and forth. I was interested enough to watch and learn. I enjoyed talking to Jim and Wat. I was under the impression that Linowitz was very good, but he was not the kind of guy who would sit down and gossip. So I got a little bit of an

education in Arab-Israel relationships. I was almost overcome with admiration for people who could patiently and intelligently and imaginatively continue to try to cope with these problems; I would have lost patience a long time ago. In the United States and perhaps other parts of the world, we believed that Sadat was a great man—imaginative, bold and who had cut through the underbrush to make a direct appeal to the Israelis. He was smart enough to see that you had to do something about Israeli fears. That was a very difficult point of the Arabs to accept. To Arabs, Israelis appear so overwhelmingly powerful—a regional power with nuclear weapons and American arms with the support of the United States. So when you say to the Arabs that you have to talk to the Israelis to assuage their fears, they find that very hard to understand. Sadat understood and tried to assuage the Israeli fears. I was soon struck, however, that the Israeli lesson was not that Sadat was a great man, but that if you hit the Arabs long and hard enough, they would eventually cave in. The ideas that they put forward in enormous detail and which they kept pushing in the autonomy talks were really not addressing “autonomy” in the normal definition of the word. There was no autonomy for land, no autonomy for water resources. There was autonomy for people; in essence this really meant the privilege for the Palestinians of being second or third class citizens in lands controlled by other people. They could pick up the garbage, which they were already doing, but nothing beyond that. I found this interesting. I confess I was affected by it. It was very clear to me that this was the attitude the Israelis took; they did not reciprocate Sadat's gesture.

Q: You had come from a different background of the so-called “Arabists”. There is a school of thought which insists that the “Arabists” take the Arab view only and that they don't understand American internal or other interests. What was your impression?

DILLON: I think that was absolutely false. I did get to know many of the “Arabists”. Overall, they were an unusually talented and dedicated group. I can think of two or three who over years or perhaps from the beginning became very anti-Jewish. I can think of one guy—bright, capable—who would say things that frankly embarrassed me. Whether that was the result of his exasperation of having dealt with the Israelis for so many years or whether

he was born and bred anti-Semitic, I don't know. But in general, I though the “Arabists” were an unusually talented bunch. I thought that they were totally dedicated to American interests. Roy Atherton himself was not an “Arabist” in the sense that he did not speak Arabic, but he had been involved in Middle East affairs for many years. You couldn't find a smarter, a more fair minded or open person. He was very, very good. Roy was driven by a view of American interests and by a view for a certain need for justice. The “Arabists” in general, who were in and out of Cairo all the time for one reason or another, I think were very good. I absolutely reject the idea that they had sold out to the Arabs. In fact, the thing that is clear is that when you are in the middle of it, the “Arabists” like everybody else are affected by the absolute necessity of bending over backwards to find virtues that may or may not exist in the Israelis in an effort to display balance. The tendency, it seemed to me, was for many of them to apologize for the Israelis. Nobody in Washington would thank you for picking a fight with the Israelis. It seemed to me that many of these people had been banged on the head so many times that, although certainly not intimidated, they did not look for disputes and confrontations with the Israelis. They were more frequently involved in disputes and confrontations with the Arab states they had to deal with. I think that the view that has been put forward of the “Arabists” is entirely false. I think that there were some exceptions to my statement, but the successful “Arabists” who got to the top and became senior officers—Ambassadors and so forth—almost by definition were people who were balanced because you couldn't make it unless you were that way. The two or three people I am speaking of who went far too far the other way never got to the senior ranks. I thought the “Arabists” were good. At the time, I thought that if I were starting all over again, I would have liked to be an “Arabist” even though I never regretted the Turkish specialization.

A lot of my time was spent looking after internal Embassy matters. That was my main responsibility. Of course, when Roy was gone, I had access to the government. I didn't get into analysis, reporting or anything like that on internal Egyptian issues even though that was the subject matter that had intrigued me in Turkey. I read with interest the kinds of

things our people were producing. By making contacts—the old Foreign Service game—I found a small way to contribute raw material to what the Embassy was doing, but more frequently my contacts with the Egyptian government were on some kind of business where either as DCM or Charge', I would be going in with very specific instruction from Washington to do or say this or that. A lot of the problems were quite operational in nature. Interestingly, it was Mubarak that I dealt with whether Sadat was in the country or not. Obviously, Mubarak had that portfolio. I am not suggesting that the DCM at the American Embassy is on the same level as the Vice President of a country. It was just that Mubarak and his own small office were the people who were available. The Foreign Ministry was not effective. For example, if I got an instruction in the middle of the night, as sometimes happens, that I would have to reach immediately the highest possible level of government—usually because we had promised to consult the government before taking some action—there wasn't even a duty officer at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. The one place you could find somebody was in Mubarak's office—frequently it was Mubarak himself. So obviously the criticism that Mubarak is too much a “meat and potato” guy, who lacks some of the breadth and imagination of Sadat, may be right. But my observation of Mubarak was that he was good. You could get to him; he was a serious person. If he said he would do something, he would deliver. He was one of the few people in the Middle East whom I have ever observed taking a note. When I sat with Mubarak, I would almost always have a telegram from the Department in front of me and I would say; “Here is what the US government has to say about this. It would like your views—or it would like you to do the following”. Mubarak would sit there, take a notebook and pen and would jot down something. If he said that he would undertake to do something, he would do it. I suppose other people have had similar experiences with Mubarak.

I had quite a good view of Mubarak, from a professional diplomatic point. I am glad to have a chance to record that. Sadat also seemed to me to be of very high quality. He would go to the Egyptian Parliament and make interminably long speeches. On a couple of occasions, at Roy's suggestion, I attended the sessions, although I could not understand

the speeches. But I think Roy felt that my attendance would give me some flavor of Egypt that I would not get anywhere else. I remember sitting in that Parliament with another American Embassy officer who would occasionally whisper in my ear to let me know what was being said. Sadat would deliver interesting and colorful speeches, with the apparent full attention of his audience. Sadat was also superb at handling visitors. He was a very charming man with a beautiful and charming wife. I had met her in Malaysia when she visited that country as a representative of her government. Sue and I had chatted with her and were struck by her graciousness.

Shortly after I arrived in Cairo, Roy took off for a few days and I became Charge'. He had already taken me to Alexandria to meet Sadat. So I had met him and had been duly impressed by his personality. A group of Americans from Minnesota arrived in Cairo—two or three Congressmen and two or three agri-business men (all important citizens of Minnesota). One had been a defensive back for the Minnesota Vikings. He told me that his knees were not functioning well because he had spent fifteen years running backwards. We had asked for an appointment for the group to see Sadat. Sadat was very gracious about requests of this kind; he understood that one of the things he had to do, as a leader of Egypt and the Arab world, was to communicate and indeed cultivate influential Americans. He was never impatient when these groups of Americans wanted to see him; he was always a gracious host. So I took the group across the Nile to Giza, where Sadat had a villa which he used frequently to receive visitors. It was not a grand house, but a pleasant, Arab style setting. Sadat received the group, not surrounded by aides; he may have had one assistant with him. The visitors were introduced to him; he started to chat with them in a very informal manner. You could immediately see that the visitors took a liking to him. Suddenly, there appeared in the doorway a beautiful woman with a baby in her arms. This was Jihan Sadat with one of his grandchildren. She swept in and said: “Oh, Anwar, I didn't know you had company”. Sadat turned to her and said: “Jihan, my dear, I would like you to meet some friends of mine”. With that comment, he got the Minnesota

vote! Everybody there absolutely melted, completely charmed by this family scene. It was very, very effective. We then had a brief conversation and left to return to Cairo.

I realized, of course, that the staging was contrived. After Roy returned a few days later, I briefed him on the visit. I mentioned the Americans' reaction. Roy said: “Oh, yes, it is the old “babe in arms” routine! He is very good at it”. The fact is that Sadat and family were good at staging these “impromptu” scenes. They worked beautifully. I am not saying all this in a cynical way. Sadat was smart enough to know that given the American view of Arabs, they had to be humanized. There are many ways of doing it, but the domestic scene was part of the play. He and his family played their roles very, very well. I confess telling this story frequently, sometimes as a joke, but in truth, I was impressed by how Sadat understood how to handle people and particularly Americans. I liked and admired his style. I did come to understand, however, why a lot of Egyptians became disenchanted with Sadat. He was awfully distant towards them; the charm seemed reserved for foreigners whom he was trying to influence. He looked to others like Mubarak to run the country. They were doing a credible job, but they faced unbelievable problems then and even still today. There were elements among the religious Muslim extremists who had picked him out as a target. There were Egyptians who believed that Sadat had sold them out to the Israelis. The assertion that Sadat had lost a lot of his popularity with Egyptians is true, but that does not mean that he was heartily disliked or hated by the populous; that was not true. They were disappointed in him; they were cynical about Sadat's charm and style. Some of the demeanor that I described in favorable terms was not viewed with similar approbation by the Egyptians. But he was not viewed by the Egyptians as a tyrant or a bad man in any way; he was seen as someone who had gone too far in cultivating the West, which had not been sufficiently forthcoming in its assistance to Egypt. People also thought that he had not gotten enough out of his deal with Israel. He made people nervous when he talked about things like sharing water with Israel. He was assassinated after I had left Cairo; we were already in Beirut when that happened. Both my wife and I felt great sadness when it did occur. Sadat deserved better. He may

not have had been as great a leader as Americans wanted to believe, but he did have elements of greatness in him. He had courage and imagination—two attributes that are very much lacking in the Middle East. I thought he was head and shoulders above the Israelis he was dealing with. There was no reciprocal imagination. Begin and the people around him were on a totally different level. I once listened to a telephone conversation between Sadat and Begin. It was in English, which was not native to either. The gracious, generous Sadat was trying to do the right thing. Begin was suspicious, closed minded and very ungracious.

Q: As DCM in Cairo, you focused on the management aspects of an Embassy. You had a huge AID mission as part of the Embassy. Did you take a look at this large bureaucracy, either on our own or under Roy's instructions.

DILLON: I did. Roy was concerned about the size of the AID mission. He was concerned about its effectiveness. He had a sense that somehow the whole thing was moving in the wrong direction and needed a thorough review. I probably came on the scene with greater biases about AID than Roy himself had because I had been dealing with that organization for years while working in Turkey or on Turkish affairs. I quickly lost my prejudices. I came to see that technology transfers, which is what AID was pushing, could only come about through sending Egyptians to the US or bringing Americans to Egypt. That same thought applied to our military mission, which was then just being established. When you addressed the question of technology transfer, it didn't do any good to cite the number of people involved or to put a limit on the number of technicians in country, as a former Ambassador had done. You had to think about what programs you wanted. In a small way, I tried to raise that issue. I left before this small initiative really got off the ground. It seemed to me that we were involved in too many activities. I am, of course, in favor of technology transfer, but we were trying to do more that the Egyptians could absorb. It is true that the Egyptians wanted more than they could reasonably be expected to absorb. To make agreements to certain technology transfers and then turn around and say that we would limit the size of the American staff which was to implement the transfer didn't

make any sense. You really had to go back to the fundamental question whether that particular transfer made sense at the time. That was very difficult. The senior levels of the Egyptian government did not think very much about the quality of the services they were receiving or their ability to absorb the new technology. I think the Egyptian leadership had the feeling that it should get all it could get while the getting was good. At the senior levels of the US government, there was a tendency to give the Egyptians as much as we could. We tried, and I think we are still trying, to do too much in Egypt. I say that as someone with considerable sympathy and admiration for the Egyptians and what they are trying to accomplish. Roy understood the dilemma. The trouble is that the US Ambassador, in a situation like this, even though responsible, by the time these issues are raised with him, it is awfully, awfully late. The Egyptians and Americans in Washington had probably been discussing this or that project for many, many months. State Department may or may not have known of the dialogue, but usually the Ambassador doesn't find out about the project until the Mission Director comes to him and asks him for more personnel. In fact, that is too late in the process for an Ambassador to have a real input. Occasionally, Roy would say “No”, but it was a very tough call. His predecessor, Hermann Eilts, was very, very tough; as much as I admire Hermann, I think he was sometimes wrong in denying entry into Egypt of certain technicians to implement agreements that in fact had already been made. The size and scope of an AID program is not an easy issue for an Ambassador.

Roy did want me to understand the AID mission. He himself did not have the time to do it. Don Brown was the AID Director; he was very good and talented. Owen Cylke was the Deputy Director; he was an extraordinarily talented man. Don was the most senior Director in AID. I got to know them well, particularly Owen. I got to know other AID staffers. They were kind enough to explain to me their individual projects. There were a few boobies among them; but overall that would not be a fair characterization of the mission. I think a fairer evaluation would be that both we and the Egyptians were trying to do too much. The disinclination to say “No” to things that Sadat or Mubarak or other senior officials wanted was very strong in Washington. There was a feeling that we owed them a lot. There was

a tacit understanding that the Israelis had not really reciprocated to Sadat's great gesture and that supported the Egyptians' wishes.

I left the job in Cairo after ten months. Whether if I had stayed ten years, I would have really gotten on top of this, I don't know. Certainly the size of the program was a concern to Roy. But to be an Ambassador in Cairo is a very busy job. Roy spent his time dealing with policy issues at the very highest levels; we were still trying to move the autonomy talks forward. We were still trying to solidify relationships with Egypt that were becoming very important. At the time, and I suppose ever since, Egypt was one of those places that attracted the attention of the highest levels of the US government, including President Carter. So the Ambassador was fully occupied with issues of highest national priority. So the DCM is left worrying about the many other things. We were concerned about the establishment of a military mission, which was headed by a very capable Air Force officer. The reason for that was that the Egyptians were buying or being given F-4Es—fighter-bombers which at the time were probably the best in the world.

That transfer of F-4E is a good illustration of technology transfers. I went out to Cairo-West which is a large airport in the desert where the F-4Es were to land. Preparations were being made for the first flight. This transfer was very important to Sadat. It was a symbol of the rewards Egypt was getting for its sacrifices and of the partnership that he had forged with the US They were also a symbol of Egypt's modernization. Mubarak was himself an Air Force officer and therefore he also appreciated the significance of the F-4E. A senior Air Force officer and myself and others went to the airport. I went because someone realized that a senior official from the Embassy had better understand in some detail what was happening and why it was happening. In any case, I was interested and I went willingly. When we arrived at the airport, one of the Egyptian Air Force officers took me over to the supply section of the Egyptian Air Force. It was series of Butler huts running along the edge of the airfield. They looked very much like the supply shacks that I remembered from my days as an enlisted man in the US Army many years before. Inside the huts were older Egyptian NCOs; behind along the walls were a series of criss-cross

cubby holes filled with spare parts. If a mechanic needed a part for his airplane, he went into one of these huts and made his request to one of the NCOs, who got it from the bins and gave it to him. The transaction was then recorded on a piece of paper. My Air Force escort pointed all of this out, explaining the system to me as we went along. He said that this was a system that had been set up during World War II. He was obviously leading to some conclusion. He asked me: “How many parts do you think a F-4E has?”. Having been briefed that it wasn't going to be a few hundred, I guessed that it would be in the thousands. He said : “More than a million. That is why we need a completely new supply system!”. He didn't say so outright, but I was certainly given the impression that the US government should not be surprised if it received a major request for computers and other modern technology to keep track of these spare parts. He did it beautifully. It also means a major change in the air control system which was then beyond the capabilities of the Egyptians.

I tell this story because it is a good illustration of one of the problems of technology transfers. The provision of a piece of equipment may be the minor part of the transfer. In fact, you may actually be talking about entirely new systems requiring new equipment, new skills and new mentalities. You may be required to install major changes in an impossible short period of time. You are talking about people: Egyptians to be trained in the United States, Americans coming to Egypt to install systems. All of these issues have to be taken into consideration when the decision is made to make a large transfer of technology.
In this case, the F-4E that were flown in were the beginning of a much larger transfer.
A group of American pilots were assembled to fly them to Cairo. They were rushed in because Sadat wanted them for Egypt's National Day fly by. Their arrival in Cairo was impressive; they were flown by the same pilots across the Atlantic and Northern Africa. They were refueled two or three times, in the air. I was out at the airport to greet them wondering how they had managed to fly the thousands and thousands of miles and arrive together at an obscure airport in the middle of the Egyptian desert.

A few days later, with Egyptian pilots who had been trained in the United States, these planes participated in a fly by over a reviewing stand outside of Cairo. It was eight months before another one of those planes ever flew again. That fly by exhausted the Egyptians' capabilities. They somehow got through the ceremony without wrecking a plane. I use this example to illustrate the difficulties involved in any major transfer of technology, civilian or military. There were many very ambitious attempts made to transfer technology from us to the Egyptians. It does take people. It is very difficult to say “No” to the Egyptians in light of the relationships that had been forged between our two countries. We should have said “No”. We should have proceeded on a far slower pace. I don't believe that a slower pace would have undermined Sadat; that was always the fear in Washington.

Q: There had been criticism of both the military and AID about over-administering their programs. Did you find that the case in Egypt?

DILLON: What actually happens is that Congress places so many restrictions on the programs, that they become an administrative nightmare. That is particularly true of AID. It has so many restrictions, so many checks that the organization is almost paralyzed. Decisions are very difficult to make, very slow to be made. Each individual procedure has a rationale which in and of itself makes sense. What doesn't make sense is the layer after layer after layer of procedures which are essentially designed, in one way or another, to cover people's backsides. There is plenty wrong with AID; it has suffered repeatedly from weak leadership at the top—in some administrations, such as Reagan's and Bush's, perhaps worse than others, but in all administrations. AID to be effective will have to be freed from a lot of those restrictions. The people who work for AID will have to be persuaded that they can be decisive and imaginative without jeopardizing careers or going to jail or something like that. My guess is that AID is a case of an Agency, as now constituted, simply has to be dismantled and you have to start all over again. I recognize that you may end up using a lot of people who are already employed by AID. That is OKAY because a lot of their people are good; it is the organization that is bad.

Q: Did you have any feelings about the reporting from our Embassy in Tel Aviv?

DILLON: I was struck by the extraordinary amount of detail that was being reported about internal Israeli politics. This was partly because it was a fairly open society. Much of the Parliamentary, political maneuvering is readily understandable to Americans. So there was an awful lot of reporting on it. It wasn't so much that it was fulsome; it was more the tone of the reporting which clearly suggested that the reason one had to understand all of these political comings and goings was because those were the reasons that one couldn't do anything with the Israelis. I thought the underlying message of much of the reporting was that “This is the way things are; therefore you can't expect the Israelis to make sacrifices or make compromises. You must, above all, continue courting them, etc.”. I don't think it was inaccurate reporting. I do think though that a lot of this crept into the thinking of Americans in Israel. There is reason to believe, however, that those American skeptics, and there were some in the Embassy, were encouraged not to be skeptical about the Israelis. But that can be easily exaggerated. Enough of the skepticism or the slightly cynical view would creep into the reporting that one could notice it. A Foreign Service officer would understand it, particularly as it related to some of the personalities such as Begin. There were clearly strong reservations about these people on the part of some of the Americans that dealt with them. I never saw anything to suggest that our Ambassador in Tel Aviv had strong reservations about Begin. If he did, it would have shown up in a restricted level of reporting that I didn't see. There was tremendous volume of reporting from Israel. There was a sense that there was more written than you needed to know. As an old Foreign Service officer, who I am sure frequently reported more than was needed, I understand the motivation of the men and women who were doing that reporting. They had been stationed there and told to report. Under those circumstances, you do it. It is partly built into the system. You assign smart, active Foreign Service people to report and by God, they will. They want to demonstrate that they really know what is going on. At the level I am talking about, however, there was no tendency whatsoever to question basic assumptions. That would have to be done at another level. Even after I got to Lebanon,

when I saw the highest level of reporting, I never saw basic assumptions being questioned by our people in Tel Aviv.

Q: What was your impression about our policy toward Libya and towards the Egyptian-Libyan relationship?

DILLON: We were hostile to Libya and had identified Qadhafi as a “bad guy”. The Egyptians seemed to share that view and yet I was struck by the Egyptians' far more cautious approach. During my time in Cairo, we never urged the Egyptians to go to war against Libya or anything like that. On the other had, there were some Americans who were intrigued by the idea that the Egyptians might take some forceful actions against the Libyans. Roy was certainly not one of those; he was much more cautious than that. Among the Egyptians—and I am thinking of people like Mubarak—there was considerable cynicism about the Libyans. They considered them troublesome and irresponsible; they were sometimes very angry at them for presumed subversive activities in Egypt. Yet, on another level, they were very cautious. Occasionally, they would remind you that they were “brother Arabs” which is something to remember. To the Egyptians, their relationships with Libya had a quality of intra-family. They were also a little worried about us; they were worried that we might do something violent which might in the end be counter-productive. That didn't happen while I was in Egypt. The Egyptians had mixed feelings on Libya. Mubarak and others enjoyed telling American visitors about the sins of other Arabs sometimes in cynical terms, sometimes rather witty. Jordan was one of the targets and we used to be kidded about the “soft spot” we had for Jordan and King Hussein. Mubarak might have been nasty about it, but he enjoyed telling about the “sins” of the Jordanians in rather scornful tones. He used the same approach at times toward the Sudanese and the Libyans and others. Later, however, it became very clear that Mubarak felt he had a duty to make these explanations, but was totally opposed to the idea that anybody should do anything about these idiosyncrasies.

Of course, the Egyptians are both Arabs and people of the Nile Valley. My experience with the Egyptians absolutely confirms that. One minute you are talking to Egyptians and they are the people of a riverine culture that has lasted 5,000 years or thereabouts—a long, long time. There is a sense of identification which you do not get with other Arab people or with the Turks. There is a sense of place and culture that is very, very strong. I would say that during the period I was there that this was very much dominant. But there are also Egyptian intellectuals who have a sense of Arabism, Arab unity, etc. It was my experience that there was little or no nostalgia for the Nasser days. Some of that may have come later, but in 1980, I honestly believe there was none of that. Nasser and his era had certainly discredited Arabism in the eyes of a lot of Egyptians, but there were still a fair number of Egyptians—"intellectuals", as they called themselves (university people, professional and others)—who did have the sense of "Arabism" and a sense of a mission of leadership in the Arab world. I suspect that this is something cyclical and therefore may return. During my period, the overwhelming view of Egyptians was as people of the Nile Valley. So when a Mubarak or someone like that (I refer to Mubarak so often because I was so frequently present when he spoke to visitors. I was only with Sadat and visitors two or three times. I was with Mubarak probably about fifteen times when he was being expansive with visitors). Mubarak may have had some ambivalence, but for the majority of the time, you were getting an Egyptian oriented view. Sadat and Mubarak would not talk as leaders of the Arab world. They talked much more narrowly. Part of the trauma of the Egyptians lies in their sense of identity. There is a sense in which the Egyptians know who they are and there is a sense of history that goes back to before Islam. It goes way, way back. They have so many problems that they don't have time to sit around to be proud of the accomplishments of their ancestors and yet they are aware of them all the time. I did not find the Egyptians perfect, but I did find them in general an appealing people.

Q: What happened after ten months in Cairo?

DILLON: It came about as so many Foreign Service assignments do. I was sitting at my desk when I got a call from somebody in the Senior Assignment Branch of the office of Personnel in Washington. I was very surprised because at the time I had been in Cairo for only seven or eight months. I was just getting comfortable; my wife was just getting comfortable. We were enjoying the Athertons tremendously, thinking how lucky we were. The Washington caller asked me whether I would be interested in going to Lebanon as ambassador. As I said, I was rather surprised. I had been following with interest the sometimes “romantic” telegrams that were coming out of Lebanon describing the tremendous violence. The Ambassador was John Gunther Dean. His descriptions of the scene and what he was trying to do and the kind of advice he was giving were riveting. I never saw any of the Washington responses, but I saw a lot of the Beirut reporting. It was clear that the US government was not looking for much out of Lebanon. It was merely trying to prevent a bad situation from getting worse. It was clear to me that the call was a serious one to which I should give some thought. So I asked whether I could call back later. It took me about fifteen seconds and I called back saying that I would be interested. I did ask about a replacement for me in Cairo. I was told that Henry Precht might be available. Washington said it would be back in touch. I immediately went to see Roy to tell him about the phone calls. I told him that I had expected to be in Cairo for a long time, but that I would like to be an ambassador and that I was really intrigued by the idea of going to Lebanon. Roy professed great disappointment and frowned, which was not a characteristic Atherton expression. Then I said: “I understand that if I go to Lebanon, Henry Precht would be available to replace me as DCM”. Immediately Roy lightened up. Henry was the country director for Egypt and is a very able officer. Since then I have always maintained jokingly that Roy could hardly wait for me to leave so that Henry could join him. I hope I am exaggerating, but I am not sure. Roy professed to be disappointed which was nice of him, but he would never had stood in the way of an officer becoming an ambassador. Then I went home to talk to my wife. We talked and she was concerned about the obvious problems. At that point, spouses were still permitted to be in Beirut. By the time I got there, they had all been evacuated and therefore she couldn't accompany me when the time

came. Her real concern was about Tom, our youngest son. We made a quick decision that Tom should go live with his older sister who was married and living in Arizona. It was the first time we were separated from our youngest child, but my wife was prepared to go. She knew that it was important to me. Lebanon was always a very interesting place. I remember that during our discussions, the question would come up: “Why me?” I like to think that I might have acquired an unwarranted reputation for being cool under pressure.

Within a very few days, I was told that I was the Department's choice, but that I was not to share that news with anyone but Atherton. That is what I did. To this day, I have no idea how I was chosen or who suggested my name or anything else. I assume that there wasn't any competition from political “wannabees”. Roy clearly had not been consulted; he was surprised when I told him. So I assume that it was Nick Veliotes, who was then the Assistant Secretary for the region and members of his staff who suggested my name. Dean was coming to the end of his tour. He had been there almost three years and was ready to leave. I ended up being there two and half years.

Q: You were apparently pleased by your appointment.

DILLON: Indeed I was. I had been in Cairo and Ankara, where I had been the DCM in both places. Cairo was my entry into the Arab world. Some of my smarter friends, as I mentioned earlier, did not think it was such a good idea to take another DCM assignment after Ankara. I should have been concentrating on an ambassadorial assignment, as every senior FSO should be. Of course, I wanted to be one, but I do not regret having gone to Cairo. I enjoyed my tour there, short as it may have been. I enjoyed working for Roy Atherton. Cairo was not easy, but interesting. Just as I was settling in, lightning struck and I received the phone call I mentioned earlier. I was very excited by the Lebanon assignment. From my predecessor's descriptions, I viewed it as a very exciting, dangerous side-show. It did not figure greatly in the policy calculations, as far as I could understand them from reading the cable traffic. On the other hand, Lebanon was Lebanon. It was

a place we wanted to keep going. The reporting indicated that the people loved to talk. There were conspiracies, but no secrets. It looked very interesting and exciting.

After having taken care of our personal situation and having found a successor, I went to Washington for briefings. Two things immediately happened: One, it turned out that the Department wanted an actual overlap of ambassadors in Beirut. That is a very unusual situation, But Dean apparently felt it was absolutely necessary. Second, the position was not one that anyone wanted to leave vacant. So I got pushed ahead on the list of Senatorial confirmations, although I did have to wait for a few weeks for my hearings and approval. I used some of the time to polish up my French. I also got the usual briefings, which were given to me by all agencies with an interest in Lebanon. There were a lot of good people involved in these briefings, but I think on some issues I was misled. Not by the desk—Nat Howell was the country director (later our Ambassador in Kuwait). Nat was very good, although he seemed a little sour on the Department at the time. David Welch was the desk officer; he was very good. Molly Williamson was the Syria desk officer. Beth Jones, was the deputy in the office. Bernie Johns was also a member of the staff. They were all very nice people and very competent. It is almost standard that the desk people tend to be good and very supportive of a new ambassador. It was a somewhat different matter when it came to other agencies. One of the things I came to recognize is that although we have very good analytical capabilities, in CIA, DIA and INR, they are always a little behind. I realized by the time I got to Lebanon that the situation had evolved considerably from one that the analysts had described. I don't know what you do about that, but that lag must be recognized. The analysts are very good and in some sense know a lot more than the operational people, but you have to recognize that their perceptions and their analyses are inevitably backward looking.

One of the examples of this gap was the discussion of the Gemayels. They were an important Maronite family, who headed the Phalangists Party. Pierre Gemayel had been the founder of the Party. He had two sons, Bashir and Amin. Bashir Gemayel, who headed the Lebanese Forces, a primarily Christian Maronite, was described as a successful

guerrilla leader. He was in his early "'30s. He was a violent and brutal man—of some importance, but lacking in political sophistication. On the other hand, the older brother, Amin, was described as a man with a lot of business and political savvy—a “moderate”. Since we all love “moderates” we assume that they can't be too bad.

In fact, when I got to Beirut, it was clear that Bashir was growing beyond the simple guerrilla leader. He was increasing in sophistication. He was naive about certain things, but he was pretty bright. He was obviously involved with the Israelis, but I didn't know how much. I was frankly interested in Bashir and found him more interesting than his older brother Amin. Whenever you get to a new post, a lot of your time and energy is spent getting to know people. When I got to Beirut, there was intense fighting in the city. The airport was sporadically closed. American dependents had by this time been evacuated, so that my wife could not join me. She was given a small apartment in Cairo where she could stay.

My hearings were rushed through and were rather perfunctory. The only Senator who showed up was Rudy Boschwitz (R-Minnesota). The discussion of Lebanon was perfunctory. Boschwitz zeroed in on Egypt. In response to a question, I told Boschwitz that the Egyptians were very disappointed with the Israelis because of the settlements policy. I said that I thought that the Egyptians saw themselves as having been betrayed on the issue. Boschwitz abruptly ended the hearings; he made a statement for the record saying that I was qualified to be Ambassador to Lebanon. He then invited me to his office, where he blew up. He literally yelled at me about my failure to understand the realities of the Middle East and wanted me to know what a great man Menachem Begin was. I was a little taken aback. That was the first time that anybody really got upset with me on the Israeli issue. Boschwitz was Jewish and an ardent supporter of Zionism, as I came to understand. The question of the settlements was one that he was terribly emotional about. He was very angry that the State Department took a negative view of the Israeli policy of continuing to encourage settlements in the Occupied Territories. I didn't go to the hearings intending to make an issue of this, but when I was asked why the Egyptians were cool

toward the Israelis, I gave a candid answer stemming from my conversations with a variety of Egyptians. There were a lot of reasons for the Egyptians' mood, but what I remembered when the question was asked was a conversation I had had with Mubarak shortly before I left in which he discussed his feelings of betrayal and embarrassment about the continued settlements in the Occupied Territories after the Egyptians had made peace with the Israelis. I certainly was not at the hearings to start an argument with Rudy Boschwitz. But I was certainly struck by his reaction. After he had blown steam, he calmed down and that was the end of it. Later I was confirmed with no dissenting votes. I saw a few other people on the Hill, such as Paul Sarbanes (D-Maryland), who was just getting involved with the Middle East. He was on the Europe-Middle East subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I had met him before when I was working on Turkish matters. I basically liked Sarbanes, who is a very bright guy and a good Senator. I remember sitting there thinking how glad I was that he did not seem to remember me because the last time we had met, several years before, he was angry because I was trying to get the embargo on arms to Turkey lifted. But he was very friendly. I didn't remind him of our previous meeting.

I did rush out to Beirut in mid June. Nick Veliotes was the assistant Secretary for the region. I don't remember talking to anyone in the Department at a higher level. I knew Larry Eagleburger, who was then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. I may have made a perfunctory call on Larry. Kenneth Dam was the Deputy Secretary and I may have met briefly with him. I did not see Secretary Al Haig. I had met him two or three times earlier, but did not see him before leaving for Beirut. This lack of attention from the principals indicated that Lebanon was not important enough to warrant the attention of the senior officials of the Department.

Q: Did you get any briefing from the Israeli desk before leaving for Beirut?

DILLON: Not very much. In looking back, I probably should have received more than I did. The Israeli involvement was an issue which was not sufficiently understood in Washington.

The Israeli intelligence units (Shin Bet and Mossad) had operations in Lebanon. Based on my limited experience with them, Mossad tended to be more sophisticated. Shin Bet ran operations outside of Israel in some areas that are very close to the country and Lebanon was a place where a lot of Shin Bet officers had a great deal of interest. They tended to be the experts on southern Lebanon, about the Druze, etc. People were aware of these activities, but didn't really have a very good grip on them. I would say that, in general in the US government in 1981, these were not matters that people wanted to get into very much. When you spoke to the intelligence people, whom, as I have said, were very good, but not up to date, the conversation tended to focus on the PLO. The PLO was at that time concentrated largely in south Lebanon and in parts of Beirut. The American Embassy was located on the boundary line, in a place called Ain Meriesa, in West Beirut. It was right on the edge of a neighborhood that the Druze controlled. The Druze were led by Walid Jumblatt, the son of Kamal, the great leader who had been assassinated the year earlier. The younger Jumblatt was perhaps thirty at this time. The man who ran the neighborhood reported primarily to Jumblatt, who spent most of his time in the south-east foothills of Beirut, the Chuf. The PLO area came right up to the Embassy. Another senior Foreign Service officer, Talcott Seelye, had arranged for an evacuation a few years earlier and had thereby some contacts with the PLO. The PLO had in fact provided security for that evacuation of American civilians.

It turned out that the major reason that John Gunther Dean wanted me to come to Beirut before he left was to describe to me directly the PLO relationship and how it worked. He had never told anyone on his staff. I was rather surprised and bemused that he had never confided this relationship even with his DCM. There was a man, Mahmud Labadi, who was a senior PLO official, who handled a lot of their public relations matters—he had been a former newspaper man. There was a way for Labadi and Dean to get in touch with each other. Dean had been specifically authorized to have this contact for security purposes. Our policy was that although we were not to talk to the PLO, for security reasons, an exception would be made. Several years before, Henry Kissinger, during one of the

negotiations, had pledged to the Israelis that we would not talk to the PLO. Many people, including myself, though that this was a mistake. I think I read later that Kissinger himself never had intended this promise to become the iron-clad rule that it became. What he was trying to convey to the Israeli was that we would not negotiate with the PLO behind Israeli's backs. But the Israelis took his words to be an absolute pledge and Foreign Service officers were forbidden to talk to any PLO representatives or known members. Up to the time of the pledge, it was not unusual around the world, for us to have some casual contact with PLO. But by 1981, the prohibition was in place and the Israelis watched it like hawks. You remember the UN Ambassador Andy Young affair who, after having a conversation with a PLO member at the UN, lied about it. He would have been better off just admitting it; lying about it put him in serious trouble.

John Gunther Dean was a bright, energetic man—an experienced Foreign Service officer. He had a very healthy respect for his own abilities. I think he was very good in a lot of ways. He may have over-estimated his influence on the Lebanese government. He was a little bit in the mold of the American pro-consul; we have had a lot of that over the years. I don't say this to knock John, but to put things into context. Lebanon is a place where the American Ambassador receives an enormous amount of attention. The Lebanese are flattering; many are convinced that their destiny requires them to influence foreigners, particularly the Americans. They are very good at it. They seek your advice, they listen to it. It is pretty heady stuff. People are very, very friendly. They entertain in great style. Unlike a lot of the rest of the Arab world, there are lots of very stylish Lebanese women at Lebanese parties, which continued even in the midst of all the horrors in that country. You eat caviar and drink expensive drinks; people are, by our standards, over dressed, but all very stylish and charming. It is very easy for an American Ambassador to over-estimate his own importance and his own charm. If you believe the Lebanese I was the most charming man in the world. Of course, there were others, like my family, who reminded me that I was not so charming and that I shouldn't take all the fawning so seriously. It is easy

to believe that you are a very important man when you are in Lebanon. Of course, to some extent that is true, but you have to keep it all in perspective.

Why John Gunther Dean did not tell his DCM of his PLO contacts, I have never understood. He had a very good DCM—Bob Barrett, who subsequently became our Ambassador in Djibouti. He was a very good officer—not a flashy guy, but solid, absolutely French-English bilingual, which was very useful in Beirut. I liked him immediately. The head of the Political section was Ryan Crocker, who is now our Ambassador in Beirut. The rest of the staff was good as well; it was a strong staff. John Gunther Dean briefed me extensively for about 48 hours. He explained the PLO connection and how I could get in touch with Labadi. It wasn't very complicated; there was simply a way for me to call him and a way for him to call me. Most of the conversations dealt with security. Sometimes we talked about other things, as I am sure Dean did. You had to be very careful how you reported these conversations. There was a special channel. In NEA, this information was probably confined to Nick Veliotes. He knew about it, but I don't know who else in the Bureau did. There was an article in the LOS ANGELES TIMES that described the arrangement, so that in later times, when people would ask me about it, I would point them towards the article. It did not seem to me that it was necessary to be as secret as we were. The reason we were was due to American politics; it had very little to do with the Middle East.

In any case, John left and I was plunged into Lebanon. Phil Habib was in Beirut at the time. Shortly before my arrival, as the Maronites retreated from the mountains, a Syrian outpost was reestablished on the Sahine Ridge, which was close to Beirut and dominated the area around it. For several years, the Syrian had had posts on the Ridge. In the Winter they would retreat and in the late Spring they would return. The Syrian troops had gone back to the Ridge; the Syrians were resupplying them with helicopters. Israeli jets shot down two helicopters, described by the Israelis as gun ships, which was nonsense—they were cargo craft. In fact, I think they had mainly personnel on them. The Israelis were patrolling Lebanon in jets. They would come over the American Ambassador's house

about noon every day, breaking the sound barrier—an illustration of the Israelis' sense of humor (a reminder of their presence). The Syrian Army was in Beirut; Syrian-supported militia were right in the center of the city. Some were PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army), which although having some Palestinian people in it, was essentially an adjunct of the Syrian Army and not part of the PLO. The Syrians responded to the Israeli shooting of the helicopters by moving short range missiles into the Bekaa Valley. The SAMs were short range—probably five miles—intended to protect against low flying aircraft. They don't present a strategic threat; they are strictly defensive weapons. The Israelis then announced that the SAMs were a challenge to their “right” to the freedom of the skies over Lebanon. The presence of the SAMs limited that freedom and the Israelis announced that they would attack and destroy the Syrian missiles. Phil Habib was rushed out of retirement to the area to try to settle this dispute. His mission was, on the one hand to restrain the Israelis, and on the other to persuade the Syrians that the SAMs were provocative and to get them to withdraw them across the border. So Phil shuttled back and forth.

In the city itself, there was nightly fighting and shelling across the “Green” line. The American Ambassador's residence was in East Beirut, in the Christian sector. It had a good view of the city and of the nightly exchanges of fire. When I arrived, I found Phil Habib sitting in the gardens watching the fireworks. Phil and I got along fine. He and I spent almost 18 months together. We sometimes had screaming arguments, but Phil was a very open person and knew the importance of how an Ambassador should be treated so that he could continue to be effective. So he respected all the conventions; we never concealed anything from each other. We got along quite well. He liked Lebanon and he always stayed with me. He also spent a lot of time in Syria, a lot of time in Israel, shuttling back and forth. Usually Morris Draper was with him; occasionally others, like his secretary, Gwen, as well.

No one from the Department ever tried to delineate our respective functions. No one said: “This is what you do and this is what Habib does”. We just worked it out. He was

the President's representative; he was a roving negotiator who dealt with at least three governments.

I was the Ambassador to Lebanon. I dealt with the Lebanese—all factions. There were fourteen or fifteen Christian sects, three Muslims groups. In Lebanon, the truth is that, as in all of the Middle East, no one reads anything. All communications are verbal; you are in a constant round of meetings. Once you have met with one individual, then you have to meet with everybody else. So an Ambassador's task is to meet all of these people. There was a major faction—the PLO—with whom you couldn't meet directly, but there were ways you could be in contact with them as well. I am greatly simplifying, but I would like to leave a picture of an American Ambassador who is constantly out getting to know the people that inhabited Lebanon. I traveled in a long convoy, with armed body-guards. Much of the concern for our safety stemmed from the assassination of Ambassador Frank Meloy who had been killed about five years previously by the PFLP. John Gunther Dean had been fired upon several times, but never hit. We were never sure whether these were serious attempts or not. Dean earnestly believed that the Lebanese Forces had tried to kill him and personally blamed Bashir Gemayel for it. I don't know whether that was true, but it could have been. It was clear that his convoy had been fired upon on several occasions. There was never a direct attack on one of my convoys. We did encounter long distance sniping; once or twice my body-guards actually returned fire. But in a place like Beirut, sniping is hardly considered as nasty or evil or a real attack. John Gunther Dean's convoy was attacked with hand-held rockets (RPGs) which are very dangerous. One just missed the rear of his car.

So I was busy from the outset trying to calm down the “missile” crisis, as it was called. At the same time, I was trying to meet all of the factions. I presented my credentials to President Elias Sarkis, who had been the former head of the central bank—a portly bachelor who didn't speak English. My French was weak, but we managed to converse. The Foreign Minister, Fouad Boutros, spoke French and English and Arabic. He was an extremely bright man, whom I liked very much. Another person I dealt with frequently

was the head the Deuxieme Bureau (the equivalent of the G-2 of the Lebanese Army) who was Johnny Abdu and is now the Lebanese Ambassador in Paris. Johnny was a military officer who had spent his life in intelligence work, which in Lebanon really means “secret police”. “Intelligence” doesn't have the same meaning there as it has with us. He was a very capable guy, whom I used to visit together with Sarkis. Frequently, three of them would be together: Johnny, Fouad Boutros, and Sarkis. In trying to explain Sarkis to people, particularly to Lebanese who criticized him for being “weak”. I have explained that Sarkis had a very weak hand to play, but he played it with extraordinary skill. I did come to admire him, as did Phil. He had been elected on an alleged pro-Syrian platform, which was nonsense. He was not; he was like all politicians, a manipulator and a balancer of forces; he did that with considerable success. There is no question in my mind that he was a patriot. The people who described him as weak were usually Maronites who lived in their mountain strongholds; they are the people who today are admirers of Michel Aoun. They felt that there should be a “stronger” response to the Syrians. Interestingly, the Lebanese Forces as well as the Phalangists, were frequently critical of Sarkis in public, but Sarkis had a direct link to these people and that was Johnny. That is one of the reasons I got to know Johnny and later Bashir very well.

Johnny interestingly enough was also the link to the Muslims. He was a Maronite and he had his critics, but the Muslims knew that he spoke for Sarkis and that he would be straight with them. So he was accepted as their interlocutor. In addition to running the security operations, Johnny was the link between Bashir and the Lebanese Forces and the link with the various Muslim elements, including the PLO.

The picture was very complex in the city. There was fighting in the city, usually about “turf”. There was a Communist militia. They were well organized, well armed. They had some good Eastern German training. Sometimes they were fighting each other, sometimes they fought the Lebanese Forces. There were constant attempts to work out “cease fires”; they were always broken. The Maronites had a pretty good artillery capability; the others tended to rely more on rockets. The conventional (clearly untrue) explanation for who

supplied the Maronites was “wealthy American Lebanese.” The source of the artillery was not discussed with me in Washington before I went and there may have been other sources for the artillery, which is very expensive. Resupply was difficult. Q: When you went to Lebanon, which was a very complex and difficult situation, were you ever told what American interests there were?

DILLON: No. I came to the conclusion that the American interest in Lebanon was for people to settle their differences. That is the broad framework. The American Ambassador is brought into conflict particularly with the Maronite community because he is viewed as an apologist for the Muslims. The American Ambassador sits down with these mountain folks, who hate Muslims, and, in their view, are defending themselves, but in the view of others, are defending privilege, which is no longer sustainable. They were told that American policy was not to preserve Lebanon for the Maronites, not for the Christians, but to preserve a country in which all the sects could live together. That goal did not seem impossible to us and had to be reached first of all by stopping the killing. That was our message. Directly and by implication, the message went on to say that if they wanted to get foreign troops out—Syrian and Israeli—the Lebanese would have to learn to cooperate with each other and to stop killing each other. The typical American approach was to try to bring these factions together; sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. In dealing with Bashir, I came to understand by indirection his Israeli connections. It is not the job of the American Ambassador to tell Bashir Gemayel to cease his Israeli connections, but I did say to him on a number of occasions that he would have to choose, if he wanted an independent Lebanon, between the Israelis and the Muslims. Bashir understood. In fact, as he got older, he understood it even better, but he was puzzled by what to do. He generally admired his Mossad case officer, who was a very high level official with whom he worked for a long period of time. He met with Begin whom he also admired. He joked about Israeli Defense Minister Sharon, whom I consider a “butcher”. Bashir admired these people, which is an important part of the story. The Mossad case officer was David Kimche, who became well known in American circles later on. Bashir thought that David

was the smartest of the lot, which he probably was. Bashir played a very dangerous game. He was often portrayed as a “hawk”, but he did understand that if there were to be a Lebanon again, it would have to be a country in which both Christians and Muslims lived in peace. So he was torn; he like all of us, lived with contradictions, which in his case, were very difficult to overcome. Interestingly, at that time, when you spoke of Muslims, it almost always meant to be Sunnis—the Sunni establishment based in Beirut. The Shiites, although the largest group, were usually ignored. They were the bottom of the pile. People didn't even talk about them very much; when they did, it was usually in scornful terms.

Bashir was one of the first from the Maronite heartland who understood that it was important to deal with the Shiites. Indeed, he eventually did. One of the tragedies is that his brother who succeeded him after his assassination never understood this policy and returned to dealing with the Sunni establishment exclusively. He too regarded the Shiites as low class savages who could be ignored.

Q: Let me ask you this question. You were the American Ambassador, a long, long way away from your country, advising a foreign government on how to manage its internal problems. Why do that? Why didn't we just ignore the internal Lebanese affairs?

DILLON: In the first place, as the American ambassador, you are sought out from the first day for advice. Some of that, as I have already suggested, was pure flattery. In the case of Bashir, he was only 33 years old. He was interested in talking to me and to Phil Habib because we were older and had had more experience. Habib was a very distinguished diplomat.

We were a little concerned about the Israeli connection. The Americans were looked upon as experts on Israel, which is really ironic because if there is a group in the world that doesn't understand the Israelis, it is the Americans. Bashir wanted to talk to me about the Israelis. Your question is a good one: why should the American ambassador to Lebanon have an opinion on Bashir's relationship with the Israelis? He really shouldn't, but I did. I

knew that it was not realistic to urge Bashir to break the Israeli relationship. I don't think I ever said that to him. I thought, though, that it was very important for me to make clear to him that his relationship with the Israelis was his business. It was not something that the US Government, despite our close relationships with Israel, urged on him. The US Government—and this was the policy that I discussed with Veliotes on the secure phone—was a reconciliation among Lebanese factions. We were particularly anxious that bridges be built between Maronites and the important Muslim groups. We thought that it was only in that way that Lebanon could be reconstructed. It was very much our policy to support the Lebanese army because that Army was viewed as one of the few national institutions. The other national institutions had disappeared. The Army was one of the few places where there was still cooperation between Maronites, Shiites, Sunnis, Druze, Greek Catholics and others. The Army was a particular example where the Maronites and Shiites came together because some of the best soldiers belonged to one or the other sect.

I made a point of keeping this issue in front of Bashir. I did not know what Bashir was saying to the Israelis about me. Later, the Israelis became so hostile to me that he probably gave them the impression that I was trying to break the Bashir-Israel connection.

It was an exciting time and I must admit that I enjoyed it. I didn't view my assignment as a bad one. I got tired of living alone in the big house. I wanted my wife with me. I love to go to book stores and I used to browse around when I didn't have anything else to do. I fantasize that one day I will open my own store. One day, soon after my arrival, I went to the largest book store in Beirut to browse. I got to the store; my bodyguards leaped out, raced into the store, and expelled all the clients. So the American Ambassador walked into an empty store; the sole proprietor invited me and told me to take all the time I wanted. I felt very uncomfortable. I spent a very few minutes, bought a book and left. I never went into another store. I realized that I was not free to roam at my pleasure. Despite those restrictions, I was enjoying what I was doing. I could have gone out every night to a dinner or party, but I didn't want to do that. I was being invited to very fancy parties up in the Maronite enclaves above Jonnieh which was just north of where we lived. These were truly

fancy parties with people elegantly dressed. The women were very stylish. The platters were filled with delicacies: smoked salmon, caviar, etc. I could have lived on these platters! I succeeded in persuading the Department after a couple of months that dependents could return. Bashir had been shelling the airport periodically and keeping it closed much of the time. The airport was in the Muslim sector of the city and Bashir was just showing his power. We finally persuaded Bashir to allow the airport to operate normally. I think it is to John Gunther Dean's credit that he managed to get Bashir to agree to let the airport be opened, although even after that, he closed it sporadically. So my problem was to satisfy the Department that it was safe for dependents to be in Beirut. I got to Beirut on June 21, 1981. In August, my wife was permitted to join me which improved matters immensely. Phil Habib and Morris Draper lived with me in the house, but the house was large enough to afford us some privacy. My wife took over the management of the household and things improved greatly. The Fall and Winter, despite the killings, were not bad. You get hardened to the shelling and the firing. The first time, when someone near you gets killed, it is a terrible experience. As time passes, although always unpleasant, you begin to accept these deaths and the violence. Although I hate to say anything nice about Washington, there are situations in the field in which people can not be expected to make the right judgements. They become so accustomed to violence, killings, bombings and explosions that they lose perspective. You really do become hardened to these events. As I look back, I realize that in the Fall and Winter of 1981, I had become hardened to the violence, although not indifferent.

There were a couple of instances that I would like to describe. The first happened a few days after my arrival. My cook was killed. His name was Habib. He ran the household. He was not an elegant cook at all. He was a good, honest guy who did not mind the large number of visitors, the Habib visits, etc. He had been at the residence for several years. He knew his way around. He came from a Maronite village, over the next ridge. He had returned to his village for a wedding. There had not been much violence during this period. By that I mean, there were no major rocket or artillery duels; there may have

been sporadic fire. That night, there were three shells probably from the Syrians firing into the Maronite sector. It was for Beirut very peaceful. As I said, our cook went back to his village. He stood in the door of a restaurant where the wedding was being celebrated. A shell dropped right in front of the restaurant. Two people were killed, including Habib. He was literally blown apart. I went to the hospital where he was taken after being hit. He never recovered consciousness, as I remember. But there I was looking at him, as he was dying. Although I had known him for only a couple of weeks, it made quite an impression on me. I kept thinking that nothing was really worth such agony. Intellectually, I had known that for a long time. I had come to understand that most political causes are not worth killing for or dying for. I sat looking at Habib dying, having been blown apart. I was reminded once again how stupid such violence was.

A week or two later, I made one of my first calls on one of the Sunni leaders—a former Prime Minister from the Sohl family. It was in a fairly peaceful area of Beirut. I went to his apartment on the top floor of the building. He was a charming, sophisticated old man. We sat drinking tea, chatting away. All of a sudden, behind my back, a huge door started to slam shut. It startled both of us. We jumped up and ran to the window. I subsequently learned that is the last thing one should do; you should never run to a window. The reason half of the people in the State Department have blood-shot eyes is because they stood in front of windows when they shattered and the fragments hit them. In any case, when we went to the window we saw four Israeli jets (F-4s—American made with big Star of Israel on their tails) a few hundred yards away, in an area called Fakhana. They circled the area, dropping their ordinance on what the Israelis later announced to be a “guerrilla headquarters”—that may or may not have been true. About 150 civilians were killed—women and children among them. I went to visit Fakhana afterwards. It was easier to take the deaths of a larger number of people. In the case of Habib, you are focusing on one person. When you are confronted by large number of deaths, you are horrified; but you can take it unless you focus on each victim. In a sense it is what gets you through a war. If your buddy isn't killed you don't worry about the hundreds that are. But in this

situation, you watch people carrying little kids out of buildings, you see blood all over the place, you hear people screaming and wailing. Ambulances are trying to get through; militiamen are firing in the air trying to clear the streets. It may sound sentimental, but one has to understand the impact that sight of a father holding a dead child has. You come to understand once again that no political objective in the world is worth it.

These were two small incidents in a whole line of things. I was in Lebanon less than two and a half years and I would guess that more than a hundred thousand people were killed during that period. The Israeli invasion killed about 30,000 people. You do get hardened to it, but occasionally you have to stop and look at the situation. Then you feel despair.

Q: After you witnessed the damage done by the Israeli bombing, did you report that? I am trying to get a feel for this. One of the problems that any Foreign Service officer serving in the Middle East confronts is that Israel is "special"—you have to be very careful in what you say or you will have the Jewish lobby all over you. Were you at all inhibited in your reporting?

DILLON: I reported all that I had seen. My predecessor reported all that he had seen. You describe what you have seen and heard as accurately as you can. What happens in Washington is that the staff of the Near East Bureau read the reports as does the intelligence community around the city. In the Fakhana case, it was probably sufficiently important that an encapsulation of events was prepared for the President and other senior officials. But in fact, you never get any feed back. The traffic is all one way. The people in the field report, but seldom is there any response. What is there for Washington to say? I don't know whether the US Government ever raised this incident with the Israelis. We may have; it would be interesting to know.

Some Americans refuse to believe that atrocities are committed. That is one of the reasons for the constant denigration of the "Arabists" in the State Department. An effort is made to discredit their reporting. The events I have described were my immediate

introduction to violence. It is one thing to be sitting on a hillside watching an exchange of fire—you don't see the people and the flares are colorful. But once you see the dead and wounded—children, women, friends—that is an entirely different story.

Q: Why did you recommend in the Summer of 1981 that dependents be permitted to return?

DILLON: By that time, the level of violence had subsided. It seemed to me and others at the post that adults who choose to share the danger with each other should come and therefore I so recommended to the Department. State Department accepted the recommendation, although over the years, it has become more and more leery about exposing dependents to dangers. Nobody wants to face the potential criticism of having failed to remove people from harm's way. It is probably fair to say that the people on the ground, particularly Ambassadors like myself, are too slow to recommend evacuations. You always hope that the next day will be a better one.

In September, the origin of fire exchanges had become very obscure. Until then, the major battles had been fought between the Christian forces—the Maronites—and certain Muslim militia. Those exchanges continued particularly along the “green line”. But then started other exchanges that were much harder to understand between, for example, the Communist militia—mainly Shiites, who had been trained by the East Germans, although their ideology was very vague—and other factions. Later, who was shooting at whom became unimportant, but at the time, much of the shooting took place straight down the hill from my house. I could see one of the poor Shiite districts and every night there would be tracers across the night sky falling into the section, followed by small explosions. You could see the same thing in other parts of town and occasionally you could see larger exchanges between the Maronites and Muslim groups. But by Beirut standards, this wasn't very heavy fire. By those standards, it just meant that a few people were killed every night. A lot of the firing seemed aimless. You soon learn to distinguish between serious and random firings. The long bursts mean that people are just shooting off guns; when the

fighting is serious, it is known by short irregular bursts obviously aimed at a particular person or building. After a while, you recognize the differences. So some of the firing stemmed from people just shooting off ammunition and watching the tracers which were always pretty, but when matters are serious, then you hear heavy ammunition exploding in short irregular bursts.

We lived in East Beirut, in an area called Yarze, closed to Baabda, where the Presidential Palace was, an essentially Maronite area. It was east and slightly north of the city. We could see the city very clearly from there. We had wealthy neighbors, mostly Christians. There were a couple of Muslim families living there, but that was rare. It was essentially Maronite land, with wealthy Greek Orthodox and other Christians also living there. There were a few Armenians around, although most of them lived in an area called Bourj Barajneh, down in Beirut. The neighbors were friendly, delighted to have the American Ambassador living among them. They were very courteous to my wife. There was an almost unreal atmosphere. There were families around, a fair number of whom were wealthy, who carried on a rather normal life. It was not hard to live in the hills and forget the miseries of the city. You could easily forget that the rest of the country was going to hell.

Q: Were you or your staff able to get around the rest of the country?

DILLON: During the first year, we went everywhere. Baalbek was still easily accessible. We would take the regular highway over the mountains to Chtoura, and then to Baalbek. Tripoli was accessible. My security people preferred me to use a helicopter to go to Tripoli, because on the north side of the Maronite enclave, there was still occasional fighting—between Maronite factions. In the central Maronite areas, the Gemayel clan prevailed; north of there, Franjieh ruled; he and his people had Syrian support and therefore you had fighting between the two Maronite groups. That made the security people nervous about transversing those areas, particularly for the Ambassador. The cities tended to be dominated by Sunnis, who in Lebanon at least tended to be one of the more peaceful

groups. They didn't have a militia, which may have been good in some ways although from their point of view was probably a mistake because it allowed their power to dissipate. It forced them to become heavily dependent on the PLO and other Palestinian militia, who had different interests. We would travel into Shiite areas, at least before Hezbollah became a force. The large Shiite organization was Amal. In Washington, in a typical ironic fashion, people would worry about Amal, wondering who these strange and apparently radical people were. On the ground, you realized that Amal was on balance a fairly constructive force. Even though I had not yet heard of Hezbollah we all understood that in the Shiite community there were some dangerous people.

Q: Did you talk to these various factions?

DILLON: We did a lot of it. Ryan Crocker, who is currently the Ambassador in Lebanon, was the head of the Political Section and a brilliant officer. Ryan and his staff had terrific contacts. We talked to all groups. The most difficult for us at the time was the PLO and the Palestinians. We did not enter Palestinian refugee camps; it was considered very dangerous to do so. We did not go into the Sabra and Shatila areas. Shatila was the camp; Sabra was the area although it was impossible to know where one started and ended. As you know, these are the sites of the later massacres. But they were large enclaves in middle of Beirut which was clearly out-of-bounds for us. We avoided them because they were dangerous and because of the prohibition against talking to the PLO. The two issues were related; it was dangerous for us because we wouldn't talk to the PLO. The PLO made it clear that they would offer us protection. Indeed, our Chancery was right on a line between an area controlled by the PLO and an area controlled by Walid Jumblatt' Druze group. Both groups offered protection, which we accepted. We didn't talk to the PLO, but we did talk to Palestinians; you can't live in Lebanon without talking to Palestinians.

As I mentioned before, I had a direct liaison with a PLO official which was clandestine, but authorized. In addition to that, there were many people in Lebanon who had good

contacts with Palestinians. So we obeyed the restrictions against contacts with the PLO, but we did talk to Palestinians. As far as Sabra-Shatila were concerned and other camps as well, it wasn't simply policy that deterred us from visiting them. People felt vulnerable in those places. The irony is that in the job I had with the UN after retiring from the Foreign Service, I spent a lot of time in the camps. By the late "80s, I made my living working in these camps.

There had been kidnapings going on in Lebanon for some time, but foreigners had not been touched. In fact, there was no violence directed toward foreigners, even though there were many still around.

Q: We are now in the Fall of 1981. What role did the security officer and his Washington bosses play?

DILLON: The principal role was to safeguard the Embassy's installations. That included the Chancery, the physical aspects surrounding it, the liaison with the police and the militia. They were also responsible for the safety of the Ambassador, particularly as he moved through the city. In some respects, the Ambassador got elaborate protection.

Others didn't, but that was the name of the game. Nobody wanted to see another Ambassador killed or kidnaped in Lebanon. I did understand that need even though on occasions I was embarrassed. The Ambassador was always taken around by three armored vehicles. There was always one American security officer riding with him along with a trustworthy Lebanese driver. The other security were Lebanese. They were a mixed group representing the various religious groups. The idea was not to be accused of being the captive of only one group. There was some thought given to using only Maronites, but I think that would have been a mistake. When I arrived, the senior local security man was a Sunni, but he had Shiites, Druze, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, etc working for him. There were thirty or forty of these men, armed to the teeth. They had taken so much abuse from all sides that in fact they had bonded together very tightly. I particularly remember

the Shiites and the Druze in the group because they were colorful and we enjoyed them. They tended to be a tough bunch, which they enjoyed. When people shot at them, they shot back.

As I said, I would ride in a three car convoy, led almost always by a guy named Mohamed Kurdi. He was a very colorful man, a Sunni, who enjoyed being seen as tough and fearless. We would scream down streets, scattering people and other cars, honking and shouting, sometimes with sirens blaring. We also always had a scout car ahead which was in communication with the convoy reporting what was up ahead. The first times you ride in one of these convoys is kind of exciting—like a kid with a new game. After a few times, it became old stuff and becomes very routine. You sit in the car, reading or writing, while all the fuss goes by essentially ignored by the Ambassador. The best thing an Ambassador can do in these situations is to leave these matters to the security people. I am sure that all of my colleagues would agree with that. I don't think I ever over-ruled the security people; my tendency is to leave the security issue to the professionals. I did carry a gun in the car. Someone asked me once whether that wasn't a little bit childish. I don't know. I carried a 357 magnum in a briefcase. I had the feeling if we ever got trapped, I wasn't going to sit there and just let things happen without trying to protect myself. Right after I got to Beirut, the French Ambassador was killed. He was a good man. He had been there a fairly long time and knew his way around Lebanon. The problem that the French had in Lebanon—and many have the same blind spots—is that they believed that they knew everything. Indeed, they knew a lot, but they were not invulnerable as they thought. The French Ambassador refused to use an armored car, in contrast to us, for example. He used to look amused when we compared security provisions. Unfortunately, he was murdered because he didn't use an armored car. If he had a properly trained driver, he would have lived. His driver, when his car was cut off by another one and as soon as the shooting started, got on the floor, and took no evasive action. The initial shots missed the Ambassador, but because the car was standing still, the assassins were able to walk up to the car and shoot him from close range. It was a great loss because he was a genuinely

decent man, who I am sure was a very good influence on French policy. The French have their own right wing nuts who believed that the French had a sacred duty to support the Christians in Lebanon. That was dangerous and was part of the problem and not a solution. The Ambassador was a counter-weight to those who felt that way. In any case, I didn't want to be in a situation like that and I felt that if I had a gun, at least I could have had some protection. The French did change their attitude towards security after that and began to use an armored car with a follow car filled with security guards. Had they done that earlier, they probably would not have lost an Ambassador.

Q: You mentioned that you were barred from dealing with the PLO and that caused some unhappiness among your staff. Did you feel that Washington was not "in the real world"?

DILLON: Yes, although that could be exaggerated. What you feel in a place like Lebanon is not a great separation from the Near East Bureau, but it is sort of you and NEA against everyone else. There was certainly that feeling. You do feel that there are certain quarters in Washington with a great sense of unrealism. When you are in Beirut, the idea that the PLO is any worse than anyone else is ludicrous. When you are in the middle of all of this turmoil, you don't romanticize the PLO, but the idea that somehow the PLO is bad and everybody else is acceptable is ridiculous. The PLO was an important player. The PLO had its share of thugs, but then all factions did. A situation like Lebanon brings out the bullies and the thugs. War and violence will do that. That the PLO people were somehow evil was obviously ludicrous. The idea that the PLO or any of these people were somehow Russian instruments was doubly ludicrous, but we got a lot of that sentiment from Washington. It was the White House; the President of the United States believed that kind of stuff. Whenever something would happen, the question would arise, obviously prompted by the White House, about Russian involvement in Lebanon. There wasn't any Russian involvement! Of course, there were Lebanese that had been trained at one time or another in Eastern Europe; but it was clear to us in Lebanon that the violence was home grown and that these thugs would have taken help from anybody—Russian, American, Israeli,—they'll take what they can get. The idea that the Russians were

somehow fostering the violence was unsupportable. The same could be said for those who thought that we Americans were responsible for the violence in Lebanon. Ridiculous! Neither we nor the Russians were doing anything to keep the violence going. The Israelis were involved to a degree, particularly with some Maronites and some Druze who are on their payroll as well. But the Israelis and some Arab countries were the only outside powers that actually intervened or tried to use Lebanese as their instruments. The two super-powers didn't! I am not suggesting that the Russians were constructive, but their ability to influence events on the ground was almost zero. The little influence they had was in Damascus because they furnished arms to the Syrian Army. There was plenty of evidence that they were very disillusioned, in some ways the same as we were. They were disillusioned by the unresponsiveness of their “clients”. Any American diplomat can understand that problem.

The first time the Russian Ambassador, who could have been a KGB agent for all I knew, said that to me, I didn't take him seriously. After I had been in Beirut for a while, I decided that he was probably 90% right. Undoubtedly, the Russians felt that they had provided lots of assistance to the Syrians and had gotten very little for it.

Q: Were the Maronites able to mount pressure in Washington through religious circles?

DILLON: Yes. They tried hard. I am not an expert on the Catholic establishment in the United States. I am not a Catholic myself. I have to say that the Catholic hierarchy in the US was surprisingly sophisticated about these issues. Whatever success Maronites may have had at some levels of that hierarchy, they did not have much active support from the top echelons of the Church.

I came to like the Catholic Relief Service which was headed by Joe Curtin. He was a good guy and he and his staff were very careful about avoiding political issues. They made it very clear that they were not there to support the Maronites; they were there to help everybody. So the Maronites resented them because they could not understand

how a Catholic organization could have failed to give them full support. CRS was very careful to spread their assistance to all factions; they were there for humanitarian reasons and helped whoever was in need. Furthermore, there were Catholic groups who were sympathetic to the Palestinians. At one time I would have said that the Palestinians were 85% Sunni Muslims; it became an even greater percentage because a lot of the Christian Palestinians, particularly in Lebanon, after a while stopped identifying themselves as Palestinians. There were fringe terrorist groups that were essentially Palestinian Christians, but the main-line Fatah-PLO was pretty much Sunni Muslims and CSR worked with them.

There was a “Holy Land” Mission, headed by a Catholic priest, who was a terrific guy—born in Ireland and moved to New York. He was very sympathetic to the Palestinians; he was probably involved with the PLO to a degree that undoubtedly worried some of his superiors. One of the finest people I ever met was Cardinal Cooke from New York. He came to Beirut and I was a little apprehensive, in part because, when I was younger, the New York Catholic hierarchy, under Cardinal Spellman, was very conservative. So I was a little nervous about the visit. No American Ambassador wants to start a fight with the Catholic hierarchy. I didn't know anything about Cooke although somebody had written me that I would like him. Cooke and his party came and they were wonderful people. Cooke was a smart, sensitive, very politically aware man who understood and was concerned about the humanitarian aspects of the Lebanese tragedy. He understood completely that this was not a simple question of Christdom under assault; it was much more complicated than that. He obviously knew a lot about the Maronite leadership and even though he was gracious and polite, he stayed aloof from them and fended off any attempts to be reeled in by them. It was just a great visit. You don't get many visits as an ambassador that you can describe as “great”. Most of them are painful ordeals that you suffer through and you are happy at the end if they haven't made matters worse. Cooke was really very good. You rarely meet people at high level whom you think are good people. That may be over-cynical, but Cooke was a good person. I was very pleased at the end of the visit and I

wrote a very flowery letter to him, which was certainly not typical for me. I told him how much his visit had meant. I am glad I wrote that letter because shortly thereafter I found out that Cooke was dying of cancer. He had known it while in Beirut, but I certainly didn't. In a funny sort of a way, the Lebanon experience has always made me feel a lot more kindly towards the American Catholic Church than I was before. I was never hostile to it, but after Lebanon I viewed it much more favorably.

The American-Lebanese League was the American wing of Lebanese Forces and the Phalange; it was active in trying to influence American policy; it was not very successful. It would organize visits for American right-wing conservatives. I remember one visit especially. It was from a dear friend of mine, who is politically very conservative. He and some colleagues came and were taken to the “front lines” (the lines that we crossed all the time). They were given binoculars to see the “enemy”. It was done with great excitement. I think that some of these people left believing that they had seen the line where “good” and “evil” confronted each other.

There were Lebanese groups that had other informational outlets in the United States. They were much more active then than they are now, trying to get American support for the Christians, as they always called themselves. It was kind of sad. Americans who go to Lebanon do not go feeling anti-Maronite and indeed when they first arrive, they get a very good impression of them. The men are rich, the women are beautiful. They entertain lavishly. That makes an impression on many visitors. If you are the American Ambassador or any senior American official, there will be a massive attempt to co-opt you. It is fun! You go to parties in lavish homes up in the hills; you are surrounded by sophisticated people, women dripping with jewels and with low cut dresses. People are terribly flattering. You have to keep reminding yourself that you are just a kid from Arlington, VA and that the atmosphere is just make believe. But it was fun! I don't pretend that this doesn't happen in other places or that it had not happened to me before in the Foreign service, but in Lebanon it went on to a degree that I had never seen any place else. What happens to senior Americans is one of two things: a few like this life style so much that they end up

sort of selling out because you can spend all of your time drinking expensive wines and whisky and eating caviar. The others—a majority—turn very negative and get fed up and indeed become almost anti-Maronite. The constant attempts to manipulate them, the pressure they feel, the over-done flattery just becomes too much.

Q: What about the non-official American community?

DILLON: Most of them had left. There were a few remnants of American business men. Then there was the American University of Beirut (AUB) crowd including both Americans and Lebanese who tended not to be Maronites. So they tended to have connections with the Greek Orthodox or the Palestinian or Sunni Muslim communities. That is the crowd that the AUB persons tended to hang around with. The Maronites tended to resent that, even though many attended AUB, although that was not their university of choice. They much preferred St. Joseph, a French Jesuit school which educated the major portion of the Maronite leadership . I am of course generalizing, but the rich Maronites tended to gravitate toward senior American officials who were newcomers and shied away from the older American community represented by the AUB people and the business people.

I liked the Americans who lived in Beirut for years. They tended to be associated with people in West Beirut (a mixed area but predominantly Muslim) and therefore some of them came under suspicion for being pro-Muslim. West Beirut was where AUB and the American Chancery were located. West Beirut was a traditional Sunni Muslim area even though many Christians and many foreigners lived there. East Beirut was almost solidly Maronite with few foreigners living there. East Beirut was French speaking; West Beirut was English speaking. So there was a strong suspicion among the Maronites that Americans were too friendly to the Muslims, too pro-Palestinian and that was one of the reasons why the Maronites were not very friendly to or very interested in the long-time American residents. As I said, they tended to gravitate toward a new American Ambassador or senior official on the assumption that they didn't know anything and were ripe for some “brain-washing”.

Q: Did that mean that you and your staff tended to look to the resident Americans as a valuable source of information?

DILLON: Yes. We stayed in touch with them. They were good sources for information. One always had to take into account where they were coming from so that the information could be appropriately evaluated. But in a place like Lebanon, a long established American community was pretty well informed. Like foreign communities everywhere, they were very resistant to change. They had made their peace with the status quo. They, and all of us, were guilty of underestimating the importance of the Shiites. That is a very important point! During 1981 and 1982, the simple truth was that Shiites were still being underestimated. The Maronites were scornful of them, but it wasn't just them. One could live in Beirut with an active social life and rarely meet a Shiite. There were enough Greek Orthodox, Maronites, Druze and Sunni Muslims to provide the social contact. It was a social class distinction and religious.

I think I have already mentioned that we were concerned about the Amal. By the time you got to know Nabih Berri, who was the leader of the Amal, you immediately took them seriously. One would quickly come to understand that in the Lebanese context, these were fairly modern men who were moderates. The Washington perception was clouded by a lag. Now everyone understands that the Amal were moderates, but then it wasn't that clear to Washington. It was more concerned with the possibility of Russian influence in these groups and the alliances with the Syrians. I don't know when it was that I first heard of Hezbollah. It was surely they who blew up our Embassy. Shortly after I arrived the name “Hezbollah” cropped up. Crocker and the Agency people who were concerned with internal Lebanese affairs began to report on this group. I suppose that other governments were beginning to get similar reports on the Shiites. This explains in part what happened. Many people who had spent a lot of time in Lebanon never noticed the Shiites.

Q: Did anyone in the Embassy flag the Shiite problem?

DILLON: Yes. The political officers in the Embassy, led by Crocker, right from the beginning were watching these people. They were very insistent that the Shiite leadership be included in the calls I made. They wanted Nabih Berri, and Hussein Huseini, the political leader from the Bekaa, included as well as the Shiite religious leaders. They were conscious of the growing power of the Shiites. The young officers took pride in having contact with the “people” which included Shiites, even though they were harder to contact and to get to know, particularly on the social level.

One of the great gaps in the older American community, which we did recognize, was its lack of contacts with the Shiite community. It had good contacts with other Lebanese. Now of course it is a different situation; the PLO is gone. You have to remember how important the PLO and the Palestinians were in the early '80s. In southern Lebanon and in Beirut, they were major players. They had a large armed force which rivaled the Lebanese army, although they didn't have the heavy weapons. But they were a force in major cities like Saida in the south. They may never have been as strong as the Israelis claimed, but they were strong. Long-time resident Americans were always afraid that the American Embassy and the US government didn't understand the Palestinians or the PLO. So often the resident Americans would talk about the Palestinians or the PLO because they felt that we were unrealistic about those groups and didn't understand them. So it was not uncommon for the American Ambassador to be in conversation with some of the American “old timers” talking about the Palestinians and the PLO. There was great Maronite resentment of that syndrome. The Maronites and the Palestinians had become deadly enemies. There had been mutual massacres. The Palestinians and their American sympathizers perceived the US government as stupid and cowardly and needing considerable education about the Palestinians.

Many Maronites perceived the American “old timers” as lacking the proper appreciation of the traditional central role of the Maronites. They felt that the Americans were being taken in by the Palestinians. So we heard a lot about the sins of the Palestinians from the

Maronites. The Palestinians pleaded mostly about the justice of their cause. After a while, you turn both sides off. Later it occurred to me that I may have been guilty of assuming I knew what someone was going to say to me and then not paying any attention to them; they might have said something important that I might have missed. But it was usually the same litany over and over again from each side.

Q: How did Israel fit into these conversations? How did you and your staff view Israel in the pre-June 1982 invasion period?

DILLON: The attitude towards Israel was cynical. Israel and its American supporters who accused us of that were half right. We were cynical because of the pressure that we felt from Washington to somehow square a circle that couldn't be squared. I never met anybody in Lebanon who was a particular admirer of Israel. The Israelis were seen as tough, brutal, real- politik people. The Lebanese were very scornful of Israeli pretensions to be humanitarians. There is an idealistic side to Israel, but when you were in Lebanon it was very difficult to remember it. The Israelis were tough and arrogant. The Lebanese that were recruited by Israel were also tough and brutal. The idealistic side of Zionism or Jewish life was not on display in Lebanon. Even the Maronites, who became deeply involved with the Israelis, basically disliked and distrusted them very much. If there was anything idealistic about Israel, it would not have occurred to Bashir Gemayel, who was an ally. He did not see them in that light, although he did admire their toughness. He thought that the Israelis were right in thinking that the only good Arabs were dead ones. He came to think differently later, but when I first met him, that was very much his point of view.

The Israelis enjoyed exercising hegemony in southern Lebanon. After the invasion, when I went into that area, one would meet the Israeli version of Lawrence of Arabia; that is their Arab specialists. These were not all Mossad (Israeli intelligence) people; Mossad people were involved with the Maronites in the north. After the invasion, the Israeli officials who organized that region and the now-called South Lebanese Army and got themselves involved with the Druze, recruited a lot of Shiite thugs. The Israeli belonged primarily to

Shin Bet (the internal security forces). A lot of them spoke Arabic very well. They were arrogant, as I said. They enjoyed being westerners among the “barbarians”. I would occasionally see them; indeed sometimes they would seek me out and talk to me. They loved the idea of lecturing an American Ambassador, even though they hated us. They loved to have the American Ambassador subjected to lectures about the sins of our society and the stupidity of our policies. The Shin Bet guys enjoyed doing that.

The PLO in Lebanon did not depend entirely on Palestinians. They recruited others. They recruited poor Shiites as did a lot of Lebanese factions. Poor Shiite gun-slingers were available; they or their counterparts are available in any society, Many of these same people later were recruited by the Israelis to become members of the South Lebanese Army, although the media always referred to that Army as Christian. But in fact, that Army and the PLO and others all had these poor Shiite gun-slingers working for them. The exasperating thing about being in Lebanon and dealing with these situations was that Washington viewed any reports from Lebanon with suspicion and cynicism, whereas anything reported from Tel Aviv was taken seriously. I have seen some awful garbage from Tel Aviv. That Embassy was not bad; Sam Lewis was a good Ambassador. But they did send some awful garbage which was taken seriously in Washington. Lebanon was viewed as a wild, savage place; the reporting from there was viewed with skepticism and taken with a grain of salt.

A good example of this syndrome is in the events leading up to the invasion. From Lebanon, there were a constant stream of reports from many sources that the Israeli preparations had been made and that they were going to invade. I had become very friendly with Bashir Gemayel, who was the leader of the Lebanese forces. Bashir, who was later murdered, started to feel guilty, I believe, that he was misleading me. He came to me one day, which was not unusual because he used to stop at the Residence frequently. It was usually about ten p.m.; we would sit in the Library and chat and then he would go home. He was afraid that I didn't know that the Israelis would actually mount an invasion.

He felt guilty about it. So he “spilled the beans”. It must have been sometime in the Spring of 1982. It was clear from the conversation that he wanted me to know.

I called Nick Veliotes, the Assistant Secretary for NEA, on the secure phone. I assume I also sent a message. But I wanted to be sure that Washington understood the context. A report, even from the American Ambassador, would not be as meaningful to Nick unless he understood the circumstances under which the information was received. Bashir did not want the invasion to occur without having told me about it.

(A FEW SENTENCES MADE INAUDIBLE BY STATIC ON TAPE)

The invasion preparations in Israel were sufficiently overt so that I could not see how an American official in Israel could have missed them. They could not have minded the extent of them. Sharon did not make that big a secret out of it, but I didn't see any reporting about it until after the invasion had begun. Our staffs in Israel were reporting that the invasion, if it took place at all, would be a limited one, focusing only on the southern part of Lebanon.

Q: Before we get to the actual invasion, were there any major political events from June 1981, when you arrived in Lebanon, to the invasion date?

DILLON: (A FEW SENTENCES MADE INAUDIBLE BY STATIC ON TAPE)

Following that, there was a PLO response with missiles. Phil Habib negotiated a cease fire. The Palestinians were vulnerable and knew it. They wanted the world to see that they had not provoked the invasion. So it was relatively quiet in southern Lebanon in the weeks just prior to the invasion. There was an alleged arms build up by the Palestinians. We saw these reports. We were told that the Palestinians were obtaining long range artillery, smuggled into Lebanon probably from Libyan sources. Your first reaction, of course, is immediately to try to find out more about it, which we were not able to do. But the reports continued. After a while, it occurs to one, that these reports may have been generated by the Israelis. You just can't be sufficiently sure enough to tell Washington with any certainty

that it is receiving false reports. All you can do is report suspicions. You can talk to people in Washington, as we used to do all the time, and say that we couldn't confirm that there was long range artillery in southern Lebanon. We could say that it was very difficult to keep a secret in southern Lebanon and despite that we couldn't find any evidence to confirm the reports. There could have been a few howitzers, a few a hand held rockets, but we couldn't find any long range artillery or rockets. We would have to admit that it was certainly possible that Libyans may have been buying this equipment and shipping to Lebanon, but we couldn't find it anywhere. People in the Bureau and CIA understood the nature of our dilemma. But we were certainly never in a position where I as the American Ambassador in Lebanon could send a cable to the President of the United States to tell him that he was being subjected by a disinformation campaign by our allies, the Israelis. I could not say with any evidence that in fact the Israelis were gearing up to an invasion. I could discuss the possibility with my Foreign Service colleagues, but the evidence was not sufficient to carry the warning very far up the decision-making ladder.

The instructions I got from Washington, interestingly enough, were focused on the Palestinians. I was instructed repeatedly to tell them not to be provocative. I did that. The Palestinians asked me why I was making this point. I said: “People in Washington have instructed me to do so. We are interested in constructing a peace here, trying to get the Israelis out of the Sinai, etc.” It was not by accident that the final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was followed a few weeks later by their invasion of Lebanon.

Q: This all happened when Alexander Haig was Secretary of State. Do you know how engaged he was in these events? Did you get a chance to talk to him? There is some sentiment to suggest that he might have been duped by the Israelis.

DILLON: I don't know that “duped” was the right word. Haig has been accused of encouraging the Israelis. I have always doubted that. Al Haig, as I understand it—you have to remember that I was a long way from Washington—was engaged at the time in pressing an idea for “strategic cooperation,” which was fully unrealistic. The idea was

that Russians were still the threat and that therefore certain countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel had much in common because they were the ones who would be the biggest losers by Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Therefore, it should have been important to them to become involved in some strategic cooperation with the US My impression is that the White House and NSC staffs had this strategic mind-set and therefore were neither interested in nor sensitive to regional issues. I would fault Haig for letting himself be trapped into this White House perception of the world. I don't see how anybody could believe that obvious crap. I still can't think that that Henry Kissinger really believed that nonsense because he was not stupid. But seeing the world through the East-West confrontation prism was the way the White House and the NSC saw all events in the Middle east. It was so unrealistic, so unrelated to what was going on. There was not a gap between us in Lebanon and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs or between us and the working levels of the CIA. But the gap between ourselves and the rest of the US government was immense because their people kept talking about the importance of our arrangements with the Israelis—our “strategic Allies”—which was sheer nonsense. The stockpiling of weapons in Israel bore no relationship to the events or threats in the area.

Q: There is an old saying that a woman stands behind her husband when he gets in trouble; he however would never have gotten into that trouble unless he had married. It seems to me that is somewhat analogous to our relationship to the Israelis. People would accept our relationship with Israel because of the Jewish vote and money.

DILLON: I find it very difficult to understand how anyone could believe it. You asked me about Haig. I am not strident on the subject. I don't think he was wrong about everything. Haig was very much part of the strategic thinking. Bill Clark, who was the National Security Advisor, was strictly a political animal with no experience in foreign affairs. Howard Tiescher and people like that were on the NSC staff. Bud McFarlane had just left the job of Counselor of the Department to become the Deputy to Clark. Bud, I think it is fair to say, either out of ambition or conviction, also became part of the “strategic view” group.

Q: The Israeli invasion created a mountain of problems for us. Were you ever called back to Washington for consultation despite the apparent storm ahead?

DILLON: Never. I have talked to Sam Lewis a number of times, although not recently. I have never asked him directly, but I am still puzzled by what Sam believed in those pre-invasion days. Obviously, we each reported things that the other did not see, but we saw a lot of each other's reporting. It is hard for me to believe that Sam didn't see some of the preparations. A couple of years after the war, a couple of Israeli journalists—Schiff was one—wrote a book about the Lebanese invasion which was pretty good. He made a nasty comment about me, because I was so negative towards Israeli officers at every juncture. I would not let Israelis use my residence. They apparently came to believe that I was “incorrigibly anti-Semitic,” which of course is outrageous. The book contains much information about preparations—about what was going on in Israel before the invasion. The authors of the book certainly had a bias; i.e. that the invasion was a disaster and that Sharon bears the responsibility for it. After reading the book, the question is redoubled in my mind about how our people could sit in Israel right in the middle of the preparations and not have noticed. Not only were there physical preparations, some of which could be masked, but there were also political and psychological preparations that the Israelis were going through.

Q: Had you seen any escalation of tensions in the Spring of 1982?

DILLON: The Palestinians in southern Lebanon were in a very defensive mode. They were making defensive preparations. There were no offensive preparations that I could see. I believe that their political leadership did believe that an invasion was coming, but that there wasn't anything they could do to stop it. They wanted to be very clear that they didn't provoke it. This was a period during which the PLO was trying to play an increasingly political hand with the Americans. Once they had made the agreement with Phil Habib on the cease fire, they adhered to it. Phil has testified to that fact many times. The Palestinians stuck to the letter of the agreement. The Israelis tried to expand the

scope of the agreement, which dealt with southern Lebanon. They interpret it to cover anything in the world despite our continued injunction to them that their view was not realistic and that the agreement did not cover any act of Palestinian violence outside southern Lebanon.

The incident that they used as an excuse for the invasion was an Abu Nidal attempted assassination of their Ambassador in London. It had nothing to do with the PLO or Lebanon.

Q: How did you view the Syrians in this period?

DILLON: The Syrians loomed very large in our eyes. The Syrian activities in Lebanon were aimed mainly at bolstering their position. The Syrians were in Beirut; they were on the road between Beirut and Chtoura; they were in the Bekaa Valley. They were not in southern Lebanon where the Israelis had declared a “red line” that the Syrians respected. The Syrians were not in the major part of northern Lebanon, but they had some presence in areas controlled by Franjieh. The Syrian army, in a sense, behaved correctly. Undoubtedly, someone will come up with horror stories about the Syrians, but on the most part they behaved correctly except for occasional looting. The Syrians did sponsor militia groups, one of which was named the “Red Tigers”. They behaved badly; they were thugs who carried out acts of violence on behalf of the Syrians. The other group was the PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army) which some people confused with the PLO, although they were entirely different. The PLA were Palestinian units which were organized by the Syrians and were completely under Syrian control. They were not part of the PLO. Someone described them as the “dregs of the camps”.

All the petty rackets, all the thieving was done by these groups. The Syrians were great looters. When it comes to looting, these armies and groups were absolutely shameless. The Israelis were the same; they and the Syrians would take anything they could. They would fill truck loads; it was all well organized. They would go through houses and strip

them bare and ship the goods off to Syria or Israel. They were both absolutely shameless. The only difference was that in the Syrian case, their officers were directly engaged in this looting while in the Israeli case, their officers tolerated it. They turned their backs and had no sense of responsibilities. The Israeli army had lousy discipline. The myth of the new Prussians is wrong. It may be that in certain combat situations the lack of discipline is good in the sense that you get greater risk taking and more initiative by junior officers, but in other situations the lack of discipline is bad. They casually kill a lot of people in a place like Lebanon. There is no fire discipline, no attempt to really control their troops. The troops loot; they are slovenly; they aren't very impressive when you are living cheek-to-jowl with them.

The Syrians were engaged in stealing in Lebanon. There were Syrian officers who, I was told, were very concerned about the damage this looting was doing to their own army. I am not suggesting that they were nice guys, but that they apparently were concerned with what happens to a military organization when it becomes corrupted by stealing.

I was told that there were Syrian officers who felt the Syrian Army should leave Lebanon to save itself. Its presence in Lebanon allowed them to steal and loot. Life is different and looser in Lebanon; there are women available in Lebanon who are not available in Syria. All of these factors matter. As in some American occupations, there is an incentive for troops to stay in occupied territory. After all, Syria is a fairly austere society—heavily Muslim. For the Syrian troops, therefore, a tour in Lebanon, with its very limited restraints, was an opportunity in a lot of ways and some of the troops enjoyed their stay. They certainly didn't cover themselves with glory.

We had liaison with the Syrians through a Lebanese officer, Sami Khatib, who is still around. He was then a brigadier general; he probably has another star or two by now. The Syrians were in Lebanon as a peace-keeping force. We didn't directly talk to Syrian officers, who were obviously under orders to avoid Americans. So we dealt through the

Lebanese middle-man which for many purposes was quite effective. Sami Khatib was not a boob. He was effective on many things.

The PLA tried to kill our Army Attach#, whom I liked a lot. He was on his way to my house in a jeep; he had to cross a check-point controlled by the PLA. There they opened fire on him, knowing full well who he was. He was wounded even though the armored wind-shield held up. A couple of bullets came through a side window and grazed his head. It was not a serious wound, but he did have blood all over his face. He drove to the hospital and then to my house and I went out to look at the jeep. There were bullet marks all over the jeep. It was clear that there had been an assassination attempt. I got so angry about this that I jumped into my car and went straight to Syrian headquarters because they controlled the PLA. They seemed astounded. Here was the American Ambassador walking into Syrian headquarters demanding to see the commander. He couldn't be found, but the Syrians were obviously disconcerted. I wanted to confront him while I was still angry although I am not sure what I would have done. I stayed in the headquarters for fifteen-twenty minutes. It was obviously a foolish gesture, but I was so irate that I didn't really stop to think. The Army Attach# stayed at our house for a few days recuperating. But I will never forget the sight of that shot-up jeep, which was well known in Beirut and could not have been mistaken for another one. I don't know why the PLA shot. Maybe it was a personal matter, maybe someone just felt like shooting at an American. Who knows?

Q: Did we have relationships with Syria at the time?

DILLON: Yes. Bob Paganelli, a very good officer, was our Ambassador.

Q: Before we move on, I want to ask a question which happens to be timely in light of our prospective actions in Somalia. It is often said that "we don't want another Lebanon". Our Marines were in Beirut during your tour. They didn't seem to have a clear mission. Has anyone talked to you or any other Embassy staff member who was in Beirut at the time our Marines were there?

DILLON: No. I am sure there are people still working for the government who went through that experience. I think the two situations are very different. The reason the Marines went to Lebanon was because in the summer of 1982, Phil Habib negotiated, after the Israeli invasion and during the siege of Beirut, a withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut. It was a tour-de-force, which I will always greatly admire. Phil's efforts were pursuant to US policy which was to prevent the Israeli occupation of a major Arab city. We were afraid for many reasons of the consequences of an Israeli occupation. We didn't want the city destroyed more than it was. The idea of Israelis involved in house-to-house fighting inside Beirut was appalling. So there were a lot of reasons to keep the Israelis out of Beirut.

In the course of Habib's negotiations, it became absolutely clear that in order to achieve an evacuation, there would have to be a neutral presence to separate the combatants. The distrust on both sides was so massive that without such a neutral party, the withdrawal could not be achieved. It was an obvious job, in my view, for U.N. peace-keeping forces. I do not subscribe to the popular view that U.N. peace-keepers are ineffective; I have seen them in action in Southern Lebanon. With a properly formulated mission, the peace-keepers are very good and can handle the assignment. The Israelis absolutely refused to consider the U.N. because it is an article of faith in Israel that the U.N. is no good. If the U.N. were any good, there wouldn't have been the anti-Israeli resolutions and other actions that the Israelis considered one-sided. The second reason, I believe, was that the Israelis wanted American involvement. So they insisted that American forces be involved. Phil understood the dangers, but time was a problem. He immediately concluded—he was probably right, although I might have held out a little more—that there would have to be American participation. He went directly to the White House. Ronald Reagan agreed and the Marines were already in the Mediterranean—a battalion landing team aboard US ships sailing in that Sea.

For my part, I would have to say that although I thought the job was a U.N. one and that we should have insisted on that, I have always viewed the Marines as a very disciplined

force. So I saw some advantages to using Marines partly because the Marines are never used as a permanent occupation force. It was clear that they would not remain permanently. Furthermore, we needed a highly disciplined force at that stage, particularly when it came to the use of fire-power. So the Marines landed as part of a multi-national force which included Italians and French and later a small squadron of British motorized cavalry from Cyprus. This force was there essentially to supervise the departure of the PLO fighters and to be a barrier between the warring factions. The Marines occupied and managed the port from where the PLO left. A lot of the difficult areas were assigned to the French. Perhaps most difficult job went to the Italians, who did very well. That doesn't quite fit the stereotype of the Italian Army, but they were quite good. Some of the PLO fighters went out on the Damascus road and that was quite tricky because there were many reports that the Lebanese Christian militia were waiting to attack. The Italians escorted the Palestinians out on that Damascus road. When the withdrawal was completed, the Marines were ordered back to their ships rather precipitously, partly because Secretary of Defense Weinberger had announced that action too soon, as far as I was concerned. The Marines were in Lebanon for no more than fifteen days. There was a great sigh of relief when the operations were finished. If it had stopped there, it would have been alright. It must be noted that the Marines were sent to Lebanon for a very specific purpose. When it was achieved, that was fine and all the troops did a fine job. The French troops, who were Legionnaires, were a problem. They tended to be a little bit older and rougher. They didn't interact well with the local population. They are a bunch of tough guys. The Marines and the Italians, who were conscripts, were mostly teen-agers. The typical Marine battalion tends to be a collection of high school football players. They are very nice guys. Their officers are very good; they are all very disciplined so that you don't get all the accidental killings as you did with the Legionnaires and the Israelis.

But what happened was that they came back without a mission and that was disastrous. Within a very few days of their first departure, the newly elected President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel was assassinated (September 14). He was killed; the Israelis, who had

promised to stay out of Beirut, immediately invaded to “restore order”. That was just a pretext; there was no disorder. It was done over our protest. The Israelis cut off the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. As the world soon found out the Israeli army guarded the approaches to the camps. They shone spotlights on the camps while a group of Maronite militia entered the camps and murdered 1,500 people, I would guess. The Israeli reports indicated only 800 deaths, but I don't believe that; I think it was twice that. The Palestinians on their side used figures like 3,500 but I doubt whether it was that high.

The Americans were terribly embarrassed by this slaughter because the whole deal with the Palestinian leadership included solemn promises, bolstered by pledges from both the Maronite militia and the Israelis, that there would be no reprisals and no violence visited on the Palestinians civilians who remained behind after the withdrawal of the PLO forces. But those promises were broken quickly. In an almost knee-jerk reaction, the Marines were sent back in. I was not consulted on this at all. From then on, it was a process of finding a mission for them. Initially, there were no problems, but eventually the whole enterprise broke down. The operation as I have said was poorly conceived and defined. I don't think the Marines should have returned and certainly if they had to return, should have been in greater strength. There were only 1,400 lightly armed Marines; that is not many. The prestige of the United States and the prestige of the Marines is such that you can get away with a light presence for a short period of time, but after a while, that fades. The potential enemies are not stupid; they can count. After a while, they notice how few Marines there are and how lightly armed they are. They didn't have artillery which some of the Lebanese militia had.

Q: Let me go back to a previous topic and that is the relationships between our Embassies in Syria and Lebanon. How did that work?

DILLON: As I said before, Paganelli was an excellent Ambassador. He had a nice sense of humor, yet he was sort of austere and serious. He had had a lot of experience in the Arab area. He was very precise in his reporting. He was not a man who indulged in wishful

thinking. Paganelli's importance was that, whenever there was wishful thinking about the Syrian role, he always disabused people, although neither he or his staff indicated any anti-Syrian biases. He just tried to explain the Syrian point of view as clearly as he could. If there were any misunderstandings about what the Syrians might do, it was not due to Paganelli's insights. He was a professional diplomat who believed that US-Syrian relationships could be improved and that such improvements should be pursued. He felt that one of the US objectives was to bring Syria out of its isolation.

Paganelli's contribution during this period was the constant reminder that Syrian policy in Lebanon had a certain logic, at least from their point of view. They had never accepted the break up of greater Syria. They believed that Lebanon really belonged to greater Syria. They also believed that the Christian militia, if left alone, would play an Israeli game and that the Syrian presence in Lebanon was to guard against such a turn of events. At the same time, they had a deep concern about uncontrolled Palestinian forces in Lebanon or indeed anywhere else in the area because they had the potential to start a major conflagration. That led the Syrians to wish to control PLO forces which of course gave rise to very poor relations with the Palestinians.

Paganelli was very good at reporting Syrian views to the degree that he certainly angered the Secretary of State who on occasion didn't want to hear those views. George Shultz really got mad at him. I am sure that Shultz would describe the matter differently, but I remember him coming to the area to be involved in the agreement to get the Israelis to withdraw from Lebanon. He was working under the assumption that the Syrians would do the same. That assumption rested on some words uttered by Assad many, many months before. It was clear to Paganelli, at least, that those words had been overtaken by events. He said that and concluded that there was no possibility that the Syrians would withdraw from Lebanon unless there was a complete Israeli withdrawal, which was not in the cards. So Shultz got upset with the messenger; he was prepared to fire Paganelli, but was finally

talked out of it. Shultz was very good on many things, but the Middle East was not one of them.

It was nice having Paganelli in Damascus, because, compared to Lebanon, Syria was an oasis of serenity and it was very helpful to escape to Syria every once in a while for a day or two and stay at the Ambassador's residence to relax. That was very pleasant, as was walking through the bazaar.

Q: Did you feel that your views were similar to those of other Ambassadors in the area? It was during this period that Ambassador Neumann, after only a short period, resigned from his post in Saudi Arabia because he felt that US policy towards Israel was too subservient and too weak.

DILLON: All of our Ambassadors felt that way. I think we were well represented in the area. We had Talcott Seelye in Damascus when I first got to Lebanon; he was replaced by another good Ambassador—Paganelli; Dick Viets was our Ambassador in Jordan—he was excellent. Both Paganelli and Viets had the virtue of fairly blunt honesty in their reporting. The temptation for American Ambassadors in that part of the world was to trim what they had to say because of the sensitivities back in Washington. You were rewarded if you were able to report things that bear out the preconception of the Washington staffs. What do people in Washington want to hear? They want to hear that they are doing the right thing; that the alliance with Israel made sense; that the strategic alliance was in our interest. So you were rewarded if you were able to adduce evidence that the Washington policies were correct. Neither Paganelli or Viets ever played that game.

Then we had Roy Atherton in Egypt, followed by Veliotes. They were very good. Brandon Grove was the Consul General in Jerusalem and he was very good. Sam Lewis had been in Israel for a long time. He was an outstanding Ambassador, but, in my view, had stayed in Israel too long. After a while, if you accept the basic assumptions of the country to which you are appointed, you also accept their point of view. I think Sam, who had been a very

good Ambassador, by this time had absorbed too much of the Israeli point of view. But, as I said, in many respects he was a good Ambassador.

I must say that I was very pleased with the quality of the people around us. In some of my very dark days, I especially appreciated the personal support I got from both Viets and Paganelli, who were wonderful. They were good professionally and also understood on a personal level some of the pressures I was under in Lebanon. They would periodically take the time and trouble to give us some support.

Q: Let me move to the Fall of 1981. Beirut was being subjected to a series of Israeli bombings interspersed with firing from Israeli gun boats. Did the Lebanese government, to the extent that there was one, complain to you or did it use different channels?

DILLON: The Lebanese government had mixed feelings. It was simultaneously anti-Israel, anti-Syria and anti-Palestinian. I am referring to the Sarkis government. It was in a very weak position. Lebanon was surrounded by these forces. That government played its cards with some skills, even though, as I said, it held a very weak hand. The Foreign Minister, Fouad Boutros, was a brilliant man. The other powerful member of the team was Johnny Abdu.

Those three men were together constantly. I met with them many, many times. We became friends, which always happens, of course. I saw a lot of them and came to respect all three. Sarkis was viewed, particularly by the militant Christian right, as “weak”. There were always complaints that he was “weak”. That was not realistic. Sarkis wasn't “weak”; Lebanon was immensely “weak”. Sarkis had very few options. He had an Army that he was trying to keep together, which he did with some success. The Army was the only institution in which Muslims and Christians cooperated. I thought he dealt skillfully with the Syrians. The idea that he was “pro-Syrian”, as some of the right wing Maronites proclaimed, was nonsense. Sarkis was a Maronite himself. He was a smart, realistic man trying to deal with the consequences of the Syrian presence. He was concerned about

the involvement of right wing Maronite groups with the Israelis. One has to be careful how one describes that. From Sarkis' point of view, there were times when that relationship was useful to him; it helped him to balance other forces. On the other hand, he also saw it as very dangerous. He maneuvered back and forth between the Syrians on one side and the Israelis on the other. Then there was the PLO, particularly in Beirut and in the northern part of southern Lebanon, which was very strong. So he had to contend with a lot of groups. It was important to achieve a certain balance. Fouad Boutros, who was perhaps his chief advisor in the maneuvering, was a thoroughly decent man, whom I liked very much, and a brilliant one. He was a classic diplomatic chess player; very good at leaning one way or the other.

Johnny Abdu was the action man. He did a lot of things, some perhaps not very nice. He collected information. He had a massive telephone tapping operation and constantly fed information to Sarkis. Johnny had his detractors. I must say that I enjoyed my dealings with him very much. He was smart, witty, an absolutely dedicated Lebanese—that is important. Most Lebanese have very little loyalty to the concept of a united country. But a few people had the vision of whole Lebanon. They did see that Lebanon had to build on Christian-Muslim cooperation, not domination by one side or the other. So we had the interesting picture of Johnny Abdu, a tough little character who is running the Deuxieme Bureau, who had a vision of Muslim-Christian cooperation and did understand that, although himself a Maronite, a totally Maronite dominated state could not survive. He probably thought that if the Maronites were clever and smart enough, they would not have to surrender much power, but it was impossible that they, as a minority, could continue to dominate the country completely. Interestingly, Sarkis used Johnny for many of his clandestine contacts with the Muslims. Johnny was trusted because they knew that he played it straight. If he came to them and said that the President has said so and so, that was truth. Johnny would not play games. They also knew that he could be trusted to report faithfully to Sarkis. Despite the fact that at one level, Johnny was a PLO foe—he was

responsible for keeping them in check—Sarkis used him as the contact man and that was successful.

I am trying to paint a picture of a very weak Lebanese government, whose writ did not run far in any direction outside of Baabda, which was the capital. Sarkis maneuvered with a great deal of skill among all the various factions. He and Abdu, both Maronites, understood well the unrealism displayed by their friends and in some cases, their relatives who believed strongly that Lebanon had do be ruled by Maronites. Boutros was a Greek Orthodox. I mention the religion of the various leaders because it is very important in the Lebanese context. The Orthodox always felt far more Arab than the Maronites, even through they were Christians with all that implies in the Middle East including some feeling of superiority over other people. As a group, the Orthodox tended to be far more realistic in their dealings with the other Arabs, and they tended not to be Francophiles as the Maronites were.

So the three leaders maneuvered back and forth. The usual concept of someone being pro or anti-Israel, pro or anti-Syrian, pro or anti-American didn't make any sense in that context. What we had was smart people who were trying to balance a variety of forces as best they could. Did they like Israel? No, they didn't. Did they think that our Israeli policy made any sense? No, they didn't think it made any sense. They thought we had gotten ourselves very foolishly in a situation which was not likely to give the US any benefits and indeed they felt that the underlying problem in the area was the presence of Israel and its expansionist policy. They were quite frank about that view, but were quite prepared when the opportunity arose to use Israel as a foil to PLO or the Syrians or other forces.

None of these three Lebanese leaders was pro-Syrian. They were “anti-Syrian”; they mistrusted Syria. Historically, there had been some enthusiasm in Lebanon for the concept of a “greater Syria”. There was a political party, the PPS, which was Greek Orthodox dominated, which was devoted to the idea of a “greater Syria”. I honestly think that by the time I got to Lebanon that probably the sentiment within Lebanon for a “greater Syria”

was minuscule. There may have been a handful of individuals who still believed in it, but I never met a Muslim Lebanese whom I would have described as pro-Syrian. The Maronites of course were very anti-Syrian, with the exception of the Franjieh group. Among the Sunni establishment—the wealthy Sunnis who lived principally in Tripoli, Beirut and Saida—I never detected any pro-Syrian sentiment. I did meet Sunnis who had a feeling for a greater Sunni Arab world of which they would have been a part, but at the same time, they distrusted Assad whose government was Alawites, which was a religious off-shoot of the Shiites. They lived mainly in northern Syria on the Turkish border. Many of the Arabs in southern Turkey are also Alawites. I have been told that Assad has relatives in Turkey.

The Alawites were about 10% of the Syrian population; yet they dominated Syria. Syria is 70% Sunni; the other 30% is divided, including a fair number of Christians. Generally, the Assad government had the support of the non-Sunni groups because they feared Sunni-domination. That is a great over-simplification of a complicated situation, but it is worth noting because you shouldn't be surprised when I refer to Muslims in Lebanon, I refer primarily to the Sunni establishment, which was not pro-Syrian. The Syrians were important to them only as a counter-weight to the Maronites or the Israelis. They did take their ties to Syria very seriously, but were not pro-Syrian.

The Shiites were the down-trodden. They were the largest single group; certainly a plurality at the time I was there and probably in the majority by now. They were not pro-Syrian, even though you may hear some Shiite leaders described occasionally as pro-Syrian which simply meant that they had some connections with Damascus and may have had some support from there. But the Shiites were not interested in being part of a “greater Syria” dominated by Alawites. The important thing is for Americans to understand that in Washington, partly because of the desperate need to rationalize the policy built on an alliance with Israel, vast oversimplification and misunderstandings of these relationships were very common. Some officials sitting in Washington liked to hear that in Lebanon many Christians were “pro-Israel” or that some of the terrible Muslims were “pro-Syria” and therefore untrustworthy. This fitted their preconceptions. None of that made any sense

in the Lebanon context. The people there related to each other in many different ways. I would also argue that the general view was that the Israelis were the outsiders who had no business being there, even though any one Lebanese faction was readily prepared to use the Israelis against other factions they considered as enemies. American officials were dealing with Lebanese who on occasion gave the impression of being “pro-Israel”; they were not, and the Americans should not have interpreted the situation in that way. These were essentially tactical ploys by Lebanese to get on the “right side” of the Americans. They understood our hang-ups.

Q: Let me ask you about that. Were you getting many visitors: press, Congressional, etc? Were you giving them the analysis which you are giving us now and if so, how was it received?

DILLON: Yes to both questions. We did have a lot of visitors. We gave them as dispassionate a view of the situation as we could. Normally, either I or the chief of the Political Section, Ryan Crocker, who is now back in Lebanon as the Ambassador, did the briefing. He was a brilliant political officer. I would hope that our presentations then were a little more organized than what I am doing now, ten years later. To a large degree, I think our audiences found us credible, even those Congressmen who bothered to listen. We were not trying to sell something. We were trying to demonstrate to people that the problems in Lebanon—indeed the problems in the Middle East—were very complicated and inter-locking. That had to be understood. Simplistic views, including the one that held that Israel was a “strategic asset” for the US in the area, were wrong. To that degree, we were certainly running against US policy because Al Haig had come to office with the strong belief that Israel was a strategic asset. Haig was not a stupid man at all, but his point of view was that the central problem was the contest with the Soviet Union—the East-West confrontation. He and his closest advisors saw the Middle East in that context and therefore Israel looked like a strong point. When you have this view—that the Soviet

Union was the over- riding problem—it is very easy to fall into the idea, as many of them did, that whatever is happening in the area somehow involved the Russians.

There were members of the Reagan administration who believed that Lebanese events were driven by Soviet efforts. It was a very skewed view. The Soviets were not out to do us any favors and indeed didn't and their role as arms suppliers to the Syrians was a mischievous one, but they had no control over the important terrorist groups. I confess that I am a regionalist. The regionalists were people who believed that the Middle East problems and indeed most of the problems we dealt with were “home-grown” and must be viewed as part of the dynamics of the people living in the area—the clash of interests. Sometimes the animosities went back very far. Only very, very peripherally, were the problems the results of East-west tensions. Occasionally the Russians did get involved as we did and sometimes successfully exploit and manipulate forces, but essentially the issue had to be viewed as area based. The problem with Washington in those days was that it was dominated by people who did not accept my point of view. They viewed the world through the White House ideological prism.

Q: You are referring to the Reagan White House. Wasn't that view just an extension of the Nixon-Kissinger perceptions?

DILLON: Quite right. It may have had marginally more validity twenty five years ago than it did in the 1980s. I must hedge a little bit because I can not flatly say that the Reagan view always had no validity. One can find instances of French or American or Soviet involvement in various ways, but what was going on in Lebanon was home-grown and had to be understood in those terms. The Lebanese didn't necessarily believe that. That was part of their unrealism; they found it very easy to blame outside powers for their internal struggles. In any case, I didn't give much credit to the theory of outside power intervention. Subsequent history proved that we were right. One of the points we wanted to make to visitors, which brought us into conflict with prevailing view in Washington, was that events in Lebanon could not be seen as part of the East-West struggle. People didn't want to hear

that because in part our position was an attack on a very pro-Israeli policy. If you couldn't view Lebanon or the Middle East in East-West terms, then you would be forced back to an “even-handed” policy which in those days was a “dirty” phrase because somehow it became a euphemism for being pro-Arab. We were not pro-Arab; we were not pro-Israel; we were not pro-anything, except very pro-American. We were very assiduous in looking after American interests. We were very cautious about American involvement. I have never gone back and looked at our reporting. When I do, I will probably be surprised at some of the things we said; some of it will certainly seem nonsense, but over-all the thrust of our reporting was that the Lebanese problems were home-grown and difficult to deal with. We undoubtedly stated that the Israeli presence in Lebanon contributes to the instability and doesn't assist a solution.

In the aftermath of the Israeli invasion, all of us felt that, although the problems would not be solved, it did provide an opportunity to ameliorate the problems. The key was a full and clean Israeli withdrawal accompanied by a full and clean Syrian withdrawal. The Israelis were absolutely not interested in a full and clean withdrawal. I mentioned that Shultz was very angry at Paganelli. The blind spot in the anger was the Shultz failure to realize that the only possible way of getting the Syrians out was a complete Israeli withdrawal. Because Shultz and the people around him were more attuned to political “realities” in Israel—even if they didn't like them—they accepted the Israeli position that a full withdrawal was just not possible. But they could not understand or accept the Syrian position which was that they couldn't withdraw either.

Q: Of course, it must be recognized that Israel had an open society with a free press, except that it could not cover certain events such as the invasion. We had a very articulate, aggressive Israeli lobby, not necessarily consisting of all Jews, but including other groups such as the Christian fundamentalist. Israel had been conceived as our ally for so long that we knew all about Israel and what was going on in that country.

DILLON: And we had a forceful and articulate American Ambassador in Israel who both understood and enjoyed the interesting political scene in Israel. Americans do understand that kind of thing. So when Sam Lewis would say: “Here is the political reality of Israel” and would discuss the Israeli right-wing and the whole gamut of interesting juxtapositions of groups, he and his staff were understood when they reported that the government of Israel was constrained from taking certain steps. That situation was understood in Washington, but when you tried to explain it in Lebanon and even more so, in Syria, it was not understood. The assumption was that Assad could do any damn thing he pleased; that of course was not realistic. He is not subject to the same political considerations as the Israelis; he was not subject to the clash of parties; public opinion played a different role. But here was guy who dominated a country, not simply by force as Americans imagined, but by very clever manipulation of political forces within his country. He is a member of a 10% minority so that he didn't have a free hand. But when you stand up and say that, you are immediately labeled as an apologist for the Syrian. But if you stand up and talk about the political realities and forces in Israel, you are not labeled as an apologist for the Israelis.

Q: You are now talking about the heart of our Foreign Service career. We came in the '50s and left in the '80s. We have lived through this relationship with Israel which basically the Foreign Service, looking at it objectively and not with a racist or prejudiced point of view, found very difficult to support. Yet we have had to live with that—most of us from afar, but when you are right in the midst of it, you can tell it as it is, but it doesn't really take.

DILLON: No, it didn't and doesn't. It didn't take, although I think it takes more now than it used to.

Q: Can we move on from the end of 1981 to the time the invasion took place in June, 1982. What was the situation like in that period?

DILLON: In the Fall of 1981, there were armed clashes which I think I have already mentioned. Phil Habib's mission was, at least initially, to get Syrian agreement to withdraw their SAMs out of the Bekaa Valley. His headquarters were in my residence. He shuttled back and forth between Lebanon, Israel and Syria. There comes, of course, the time when one can no longer determine who is retaliating against whom. The cycle of violence becomes so ingrained that everyone is retaliating for something someone else has done. The question is how it is done. The Palestinian retaliation was pretty weak stuff because they were feeble. The Israeli retaliations were through shelling from the gunboats off the coast and air strikes which are far more destructive on the ground in terms of human costs than what the Palestinians were doing. Both sides had an awful righteousness about what they were doing. That was one of the reasons that they were all exasperating to deal with. The idea that all Arabs and Israelis were cynical was easy to believe, but in fact, most are just damned self-righteous. They each believe that their case is so self-evidently correct that if one does not accept it, there is something wrong with you, not them. So when you get caught in between as an American, you find you are surprised that both Arabs and Israelis are intensely hostile to you because each side believes that it is so self-evident that it is right; each sees itself as the victim and the aggrieved. The idea that an American can have a “balanced” view is almost immoral in their eyes. You do get that feeling in dealing with Palestinians and certainly with Israelis.

That was the attitude that Habib was dealing with. He finally worked out a cease-fire sometime in the fall, 1981. From then on, the cease-fire held partly because the Palestinians were in a weak position and with the exception of few extremist groups, it was very much in their interest to stick to the cease-fire. The Israelis were, I think it is fair to say, always tempted to break it because if you are in a strong position you are less interested in a cease-fire. When people write revisionist history, it is worth examining when they say that the “stronger” of the two parties was forced to violate a cease-fire because of the actions of the “weaker” party. It usually doesn't happen that way. It is usually the “weaker” party that wants to maintain a cease-fire. In fact the PLO wanted the cease-

fire and it stuck with it to the maximum degree possible. They enforced discipline on their people.

Eleven months of essentially unbroken cease-fire went by. Then the Israelis unilaterally announced that the cease-fire applied not only for southern Lebanon, but it applied world-wide. That was not true. What broke the cease-fire in Israeli eyes was the assassination attempt on the Israeli Ambassador in London in June, 1982. He lived, but I think was crippled for life. The fact that the Ambassador didn't die was only a miracle; the bullets lodged in the spine and he never walked again. The attempt was the work of the Abu Nidal group, which was an independent terrorist group and very anti-PLO. Abu Nidal, as a matter of fact, was under death sentence by the PLO for assassinations of moderate Palestinians.

The Israelis retaliated by bombing in Lebanon. The Palestinians retaliated by firing some rockets into northern Israel. The Israelis bombed again and then invaded Lebanon in massive strength. I did not realize fully at the time how public the preparations for the invasion had been in Israel. I have to say that I don't understand why the Americans in Israel did not report more on those preparations. Inside Lebanon, we had many, many reports that the invasion was coming. There was constant apprehension on part of Lebanese and Palestinians. They would talk to us and we would duly report these conversations. From Washington's point of view, clearly Palestinian or Shiite warnings about an imminent Israeli invasion was seen as self-serving. So I didn't expect a report from Lebanon that “they are coming” to be accepted as fact, but I do not understand why there wasn't better reporting on the preparations out of Israel.

There were constant reports from Israel of Palestinian build-up. It is very hard to prove the negative. If there are reports of Libyan-supplied heavy artillery in southern Lebanon, you can be sure that the source was Israel. And we “looked into” those reports. It was very difficult to prove that the artillery was not there. One can't really be sure. We, CIA and the military attach#s, could only say that we couldn't prove that the pieces were there or not,

only that we saw no evidence of their presence. You can see how weak an analysis that was compared to an Israeli military intelligence briefer saying with certainty that pieces were located here and there. Then there were we Americans in Lebanon, who were suspect anyhow because some felt that we had probably sold out to the Arabs, saying that we couldn't say definitely whether the artillery was there or not; we just had no evidence of its presence. We did know that there were rockets.

In retrospect, I can say that there were no secrets in Lebanon. It was almost impossible to hide anything. I wish we had been more forceful than we were. In truth, if there had been artillery in southern Lebanon, we would have known it. It wasn't there. In retrospect, the “presence” of the artillery was clearly a propaganda build-up to justify an invasion which had been decided for domestic political purposes in Israel.

There were people in Israel who saw an opportunity to remake the political map of the Middle East. They saw a chance to convert weak Lebanon on their northern border into a Christian led client state, dependent on them. They were conspiring with the Lebanese Forces, led by my friend Bashir Gemayel. There was a propaganda build up leading up to the invasion. As I mentioned earlier, Bashir Gemayel and I had become quite friendly. He was the youngest son of Pierre Gemayel who was the head of the Phalange party. His elder brother was Amin Gemayel who later became President of Lebanon. Bashir was a man who had been a guerrilla fighter since he was 14 years old; he had been a successful fighter. He then headed the strongest Maronite militia, which wiped out the other Maronite militias. He had treated the other Maronite militias as brutally as he treated Palestinians or any other group that got in his way. Bashir was in his early '30s when I first came to know him. He was just beginning to transit from a guerrilla leader to a politician, which was an old metamorphosis in many countries, including Israel. When he came to see me, we enjoyed bantering, but I also gave him serious advice. I was concerned about his relationship with Israel because I saw in Bashir a potential leader for all of Lebanon. It

would have been impossible to be the leader of all of Lebanon and an Israeli agent at the same time and I suspected he was the latter. It turned out later that I was right.

Bashir became fond of me. We became friends. I think he knew I was honest with him. He was curious about the United States; he was curious about American intentions; he was curious about American policy. He understood how painful it was for me to be completely honest and realistic with him, particularly about what he might or what he might not expect from the United States on certain issues.

One evening, in the late Spring, he came to me at a time when there were many, many stories about the coming Israeli invasion. There were just the two of us. We sat down and he looked at me and said, rather formally: “Mr. Ambassador, you know they are really coming”. I asked him what he meant. “Look, the Israelis are really coming”, he replied. What I realized at that moment was that he was in on it. He felt a compulsion to be in a position of not having lied to me. I am sure that is what happened. We had had an open and frank relationship which he had come to appreciate. He did not want to be in a position of having lied to me. I reported our conversation to Washington. I even talked to Nick Veliotes, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, on the secure phone. I told him what had happened. I knew that Nick would understand the circumstances and the reasons for Bashir's comments. You would have to ask Nick what was going on in Washington at the time, but I don't think that the leadership thought the invasion would take place. The reporting out of Lebanon was viewed as Palestinians just “crying wolf”, even though Bashir was certainly not a Palestinian.

This is all part of the question whether General Sharon was given a “green” light by Al Haig. I don't believe he was. I believe Haig when he denies it, even though in Israel everybody believes that Sharon was given the “OKAY” signal. Sharon came to Washington in May, 1982 and in effect described an invasion plan. According to the public record, Haig very carefully told him that Israel couldn't do anything like that on a flimsy pretext. He wanted to make it clear that if they just drummed up a pretext for an invasion,

the United States would be opposed. I have talked to a person who was sitting at Haig's right hand during the talks with Sharon. So I have a pretty good idea of what went on. There was some more back and forth between Haig and Sharon. Then Sharon left and Haig's staff said to him that he had in effect given Sharon a “green” light. Haig denied it. I am told that Haig was then told: “Mr. Secretary, Sharon just left here believing that if he invades Lebanon, the United States will not oppose him”. Haig said that had not been his purpose. A letter was then drafted from Haig to Sharon presumably to clarify our position and to make it clear that in fact the United States was opposed to an invasion of Lebanon. But Sharon already had his answer. Americans sometimes don't understand this. Sharon didn't care whether Americans approved or disapproved of whatever he wanted to do. He just wanted to know whether the US would take any punitive action. He had sat and looked at the Secretary, who was a distinguished military officer himself, and immediately understood that the Americans were not going to take any action if Israel were to invade Lebanon. He saw that there would be no political costs to Israel. And that is the message that Sharon got during his meeting with Haig. The question was not whether the United States would approve of the invasion—Sharon knew that couldn't be the case. But he wanted to know whether we would either try to stop it or take punitive action afterwards. He concluded that there would be none. If the United States wants to do anything about prevention, whether it be with the Greeks or the Israelis or the Palestinians or anyone else, you have to grab the other guy by the collar and shake him and say: “God damn it, we are opposed! You must understand that there will be consequences. You can not do what you have in mind with impunity; there will be some cost to you!”. That would have been the only way to deal with the Israelis; we didn't do it and that makes me very angry.

Afterwards, of course, we were all sitting around wondering how it all happened. We all agreed that the invasion was not in US interests; it harmed those interests. The President of the US came to that conclusion. In fact, by now, even the majority of the Israelis have come to the conclusion that invasion was not in their interest. And that goes beyond the 650 or so Israelis that were killed in the venture. There are times when you must be very,

very direct in dealing with people and we are not. We are therefore constantly being surprised when others do outrageous things—as recently illustrated by the 1991 Iraq invasion of Kuwait.

Q: I would like to pursue this issue of warning. In diplomacy, you normally understate matters. There have been rare occasions when diplomats have threatened, but it is not in the nature of the business to do so.

DILLON: In this particular case, we had two experienced officials dealing with each other. They understood each other. There was a whole history of relationships that both understood. I found a similar problem with my own staffs and other senior Foreign Service officers with whom I have dealt over the years. We understood each other; we didn't have to spell things out. In my present job, in dealing with my staff, I now understand that this doesn't happen all the time. I now have to be very direct and clear. In dealing with General Sharon, with Saddam Hussein, you can't be subtle. You have to be very clear and direct. If you are not, it will be misinterpreted. Their only concern is for the consequences. Sharon was a criminal, even if he was a brilliant soldier. He was a thoroughly dishonest man; he was an ambitious politician and a lousy human being. He didn't give a damn whether nice people like us approved or disapproved of his butchering several thousand people. What he wanted to know was whether there would be any cost involved. So you have to be perfectly clear when dealing with people like that. They have to know that there would be consequences. You may be constrained in saying what those consequences might be although the clearer you are on what the cost might be, the better, but that may not be possible under all circumstances. But that there would be consequences has to be said. That was the problem with our dialogue with Saddam Hussein. There was a failure on our part to make clear that he would have to bear some cost if he invaded Kuwait.

I think Saddam Hussein was shocked when we reacted as we did. I don't think it ever occurred to him that there would be serious cost for his actions.

Q: The invasion occurred on June 6, 1982. Were you just waiting for the "shoe to drop" at this point?

DILLON: Yes. The Israelis invaded and immediately announced that they would "drive the Palestinian artillery back from the border" where it was a threat to Israel. This rang false with us because we didn't really believe that there was artillery in southern Lebanon although we couldn't be certain. There may have been a gun someplace. Our military attach#, who couldn't get anybody to really pay any attention to him—he would submit lots of reports, but nobody in Washington really cared about them—immediately noticed that the Israelis were using too much strength for the limited purposes they had announced. The attach# said that it was not a border foray; he predicted that there was something more than just moving a few artillery pieces back 25 miles. The Israelis kept coming. The Syrian air force rose to meet them and was destroyed in two days—they lost something like 85 airplanes. The Israelis lost one plane. Some people were of course delighted by the evidence that American weapons were so far better than the third rate stuff that Syrians had gotten from the Soviets.

The Israelis kept coming. The Palestinians chose to fight at Saida at a place called Ain El Hilweh, which was the largest refugee camp. They fought and held up the Israelis for several days. Eventually, the Israelis leveled Ain El Hilweh; then moved north and killed a lot of civilians in their advance. They used tanks and heavy weapons. My recollection is that they divided into two or three columns, one of which smashed up the coast through Ain El Hilweh and Damour. The column moved to Beirut. One other column was in the Bekaa Valley going though the mountain passes. The Syrians fought surprisingly well, but were eventually overwhelmed by superior numbers and equipment and indeed by better tactical leadership. On the tactical level, the Israelis were very good. It is at other levels that one can fault them.

In the midst of this, we were sitting in Beirut and reporting what we could see. It became clear to us that a full scale invasion was taking place. I thought that Beirut was the

objective, even though the Israelis were still claiming that they were interested only in the 40 kilometers north of their borders. But they were already well beyond that line and not with just a few patrols. They were into mid-Lebanon in strength. It was at this time that Begin sent a reassuring message to Reagan asserting that the Israeli action was intended solely to move the artillery back. That was clearly a lie. We in Lebanon called it a lie in polite language. It was clearly not what was happening.

Q: In retrospect, could you have just said: "The Prime Minister of Israel has lied"? Could you have just started a telegram with those words? Would it have gained some attention that way?

DILLON: We probably should have done it that way, but such a phrase was just not in our vocabulary. I don't think we were ever that sharp, but we did note that the Israelis were going far beyond what they said. We evacuated our dependents. There were civilian planes trapped at Beirut airport. The Israelis were bombing and strafing around the airport. There were four or five or perhaps even six foreign airliners trapped at the airport. Fortunately none were hit. We got the Israelis to agree to a cease-fire of one hour for the airfield so that our dependents, including my wife, could be flown out. So we hustled everyone to the airport in busses. Then the pilots wouldn't believe that the Israelis would keep the cease-fire. So we had a big argument with the pilots. They delayed taking off, by which time the hour had passed and the Israelis resumed their military activity. So we had to go back to the Israelis to plead for another cease-fire, which we finally got. Then we had another argument with the pilots who were still skeptical. The planes finally took off. The last one—a British airliner—bearing my wife, took off and as the plane taxied to the end of the runway for take off, the Israelis resumed their bombing and strafing. The plane took off nevertheless and Sue got to London safely, after leaving Lebanon during a bombing raid.

Q: What were the Israelis bombing and strafing?

DILLON: That is a good question. The Israelis were always obsessed with Beirut airport. It was such a symbol of Lebanese independence. They had raided that field with helicopters and commandoes in the past. At the end of the runway, there were Shiite and PLO positions which had light aircraft guns in them. They were totally ineffective. I suppose that was their target. But it was undoubtedly partly intimidation to assert to Lebanon that it was trapped because the large international airport was no longer useable. So it was a psychological as well as a military operation.

So the dependents left. As the Ambassador, I didn't do a lot of traveling around. My staff did most of that; I tried to be the quarterback sitting in the center of the situation. The Israelis continued their march northward; they had entered the southern part of Beirut still maintaining that their action was still only an “incursion” and that they would withdraw to Israel in the near future. We didn't believe them. The PLO was withdrawing into the city, setting up defenses there.

I stayed in my house, as I mentioned, which was in the hills, not far from Babda where the Presidential Palace was. There is a road which passed my house. One day, on that road, about # mile from my house, we could see an Israeli tank column advancing. We immediately reported that to the Operations Center of the Department. The answer was: “Well, we have assurances from Tel Aviv that the Israelis are still well south of Beirut”. So I repeated again that I could see the tanks from my house—north-east of Beirut—and they were moving towards the city. The Operations Center just wouldn't believe me. Finally I said: “God damn it, this is the American Ambassador. Tel Aviv is lying to you. Doesn't anybody care back there?”. There was a moment of silence and then a plaintive woman's voice said: “I care, Mr. Ambassador”. I was touched and gratified. There was at least one person who cared. The Israelis were lying. But when you reported from Lebanon about Israeli actions, Washington called Tel Aviv to check our observations. The Israelis denied and Washington believed them, even though the American Ambassador was reporting that he was seeing the tanks and the self-propelled artillery.

The Israelis had a great sense of humor. They stuck the tanks and the artillery all around my house and then proceeded to shell Beirut from there. That had two effects: one, it annoyed the American Ambassador, whom they disliked in any case and second, when the Palestinians retaliated, they had to fire in the direction of the American Ambassador's house. Some Israeli officers showed up to pay a call on me; I refused to receive them. I was later told that that was very impolite of me. It wasn't; I was accredited to Lebanon and I didn't have any business receiving the officers of an invading army. What they clearly expected to do was to use my house as sort of a headquarters, which I of course refused.

The siege of Beirut lasted something like 50 days—it seemed forever. We were holed up in the house surrounded by Israelis. The siege was savage. Our military observers counted on some days that 8,000 rounds of artillery were fired by the Israelis on a limited area of Beirut. Occasionally, the newspapers reported rocket and artillery “duels”. Rocket and artillery “duels” consisted of Israeli rounds—a lot of 155 millimeters which are large shells—going into the city and every once in a while some Palestinian popping out of a hole with a hand launcher, firing a rocket. The only thing that the Palestinians ever hit was the air conditioner of my house. That was not funny; there were about thirty people living in the house by that time. That was the “duel”. I should also note that what thirty people do to plumbing is no joke, particularly in the middle of a hot, hot Mediterranean summer. We were living cheek by jowl without air conditioning. It was no lark.

Phil Habib was also living in the house. So he and we were reporting at the same time. His mission got more attention than we did. There was a famous incident I should mention. A cease-fire had been declared and Habib was on the phone back to Washington reporting that the Israelis had broken it and were firing into Beirut. He got the same answer that I got. Washington said: “Ambassador Habib, we have been in touch with Tel Aviv and are assured that the cease-fire is holding. The Israelis are denying that there is any firing.” Habib then stuck the phone out of the window just as two tanks fired, with a huge amount of noise. That was a famous story, which was reported in Israel, although there, I was

mentioned as the person on the phone. Sharon then made a statement to the press, outraged at me, attacking me for my non-professionalism as someone who stuck a telephone out of a window believing that anyone could tell one explosion from another. He then said that if I had been one of his junior officers, he would have fired me.

There were numerous cease-fires. They were all violated—all by the Israelis. The Palestinians were in such a weak position that they desperately wanted the cease-fires so that they could pump water up to their shelters, carry the wounded out, etc. They wanted some respite. The Israelis didn't want cease-fires because they wanted to keep the pressure on.

Q: What did you think the Israelis were trying to accomplish?

DILLON: They were trying to kill as many PLO as possible. They spent a lot of time trying to kill Arafat, the head of the PLO. They had agents in the city and whenever they had Arafat spotted, whether there was a cease-fire or not, they would zero in on him. Several times, they would initiate air-strikes on apartment buildings that he just left. Arafat moved from place to place throughout this time. In the meantime, we, the Americans, were the go-between trying to negotiate a cease-fire and an evacuation. Habib handled most of that. The interlocutor with the Palestinians, in most cases, was Wazan, who was the Prime Minister and a Sunni. Habib, assisted by Morris Draper, went back and forth to arrange the cease-fire and the evacuation. He did a magnificent job; he was good. He got fairly good agreement, but there were problems left. Where would the PLO go, which was a perfect illustration of the Palestinian problem because they have no place to go. The PLO agreed to evacuate if we could find some place for them to go. Of course, every Arab government said “No, we won't take them”. There were 13-17,000 PLO fighters. The US put massive pressure on the Tunisians, who finally agreed to take the bulk of the fighters. Then others agreed to take a few. Syria took some; Jordan took some; Sudan took some. So a cease-fire was arranged.

Just before the end, I was in the library in my house, which had become one of two command centers—the other was upstairs where we had all of our communications. I was there with Habib and Bashir Gemayel and Wazan, the Prime Minister. Bashir had just given his personal guarantee to Habib that if the Palestinians fighters left, no action would be taken against the remaining Palestinians. Phil, in turn, had gotten assurances from the Israelis that they would not enter Beirut, once the fighters had evacuated and that they would not take any reprisals against the remaining Palestinians. Wazan was the interlocutor with the PLO; we were still maintaining the fiction, except for my “security” contact, that we didn't deal directly with the PLO. So we were all listening in as Wazan on a speaker phone was trying to convince a frantic Arafat, who was really concerned, that the remaining civilians would not be harmed. Arafat finally agreed to evacuate.

Immediately thereafter, the Marines landed along with the other multi-national forces. The evacuation proceeded. There were dramatic scenes at the dock as the Palestinian men left their wives and children behind. People were crying; there was great sorrow. Guns were being shot in the air. In typical Arab fashion, the PLO declared victory because they all lived to fight another day. A fine job was done by all and the multi-national force withdrew.

One reason I and my staff were so bothered by the Sabra-Shatila massacre is because we were present when Arafat, clearly very concerned about the fate of the Palestinians who were going to be left behind, was being given assurances that the women, children and old people would not be harmed. And they were butchered.

Q: What were you doing as the PLO fighters pulled out?

DILLON: The Israelis were all around Beirut and had been creeping into the city. There was no American Embassy at the time in the city. The Embassy in effect was in my house. By this time, the house was behind Israeli lines. There were Israeli artillery positions almost besides the house as I mentioned earlier. The Lebanese forces—the Maronite

militia—was in the area but had declined to join in the fighting. The Israelis were very disappointed by this policy because they thought they had a commitment from the Lebanese Forces. They apparently had some covert cooperation, but no overt action. Bashir Gemayel had just been elected President. The population of Beirut had been reduced to about # million, most of them Lebanese, but including a fairly good number of Palestinians.

Once the PLO fighters had been evacuated, the Israelis were to be in static positions, but there was no opposition to them except the multi-national forces which were thinly spread around Beirut in defensive positions. When Bashir Gemayel was elected President, even though some people considered him a “thug” and a fighter, many of us thought he was a good choice. He was 34 years old. He had certainly developed a great deal of sophistication over the previous year or so. He had progressed from being a fighter to a fairly astute politician. As I have mentioned, he had covert relations with the Israelis, which was an anathema to other Lebanese. On the other hand, he had a vision of Lebanon which included Muslims, unlike many Maronites who did not see such a multi-religious community. He recognized the necessity of dealing with the Shiites and was elected with a good deal of support from that community. He didn't get any support, nor did he seek it, from the old line Sunni Muslim leadership which was the traditional leadership that the Maronites and American administrations had always dealt with. In Beirut, there was a vacuum; only local police were patrolling the streets. No armies or militias were in the city. A very few days after the evacuation of PLO forces, Bashir went to a Phalange Party meeting in Ashrafiyah, which was its stronghold. The Phalange was the right-wing party led by Bashir's father. In effect, what Bashir was doing was having a series of victory celebrations and was using them with some skill, not simply to gloat on the victory, but to prepare for what had to be done after the victory—repair ties, reassure people who might not have been enthusiastic that he would be cooperative and so on. The Phalange by this time had came to understand that their name was an unfortunate one stemming from Franco's fascist regime in Spain. It understood that to Western reporters the word

“Phalange” had a bad connotation. So they simply called themselves Kataeb, which simply meant “The organization” and that is how we in the Embassy referred to them. A Kataeb headquarters was in an apartment in Ashrafiyah which was in East Beirut. Since all the Muslims had been expelled from that area, there were only Christians in that neighborhood, mostly Maronites. The apartment house in addition to holding offices had also people living in it. One of the families that lived there was the Shartouni family who were Greek-Orthodox. As we later found out, some members of that family had been involved with groups that favored the union of Lebanon and Syria. As I mentioned before, people who subscribed to this policy were mainly Greek-Orthodox, although undoubtedly there were members of other faiths who believed in a “greater” Syria. Bashir's murder was caused by a large bomb being placed in the apartment above the Phalange headquarters which was occupied by the Shartouni family. When the bomb went off, a number of people were killed. A number of hours passed before it was established that Bashir had been among the dead. In the meantime, there were many rumors that he was still alive, although within a couple of hours we were certain that he had been assassinated.

The way we found out what happened was that Lebanese intelligence, particularly the Deuxieme Bureau, although ineffective in many ways, had a massive telephone monitoring operation. They literally taped everything; they had heaps and heaps of tapes. As far I as I could tell, their analysis was very ineffective. They had lots and lots of raw information, but rarely did they syphon out intelligence which they could act upon in a timely fashion. But after the explosion, they went through their tapes and found a phone call from Shartouni to his sister. She lived in the apartment above the headquarters and was told to get her parents out of that apartment. Shartouni was subsequently arrested. He had planned the bombing on the supposition that his family would be gone and then discovered that they would be there. He panicked and was overheard. Shartouni was arrested; I don't know what happened to him, but I am sure he lived a short and unhappy life. We did hear about his confession during which he never admitted that he had worked for anybody. There is no particular reason to think that the political party to which he belonged was behind

his actions. He had been recruited by somebody, but it was not at all clear who that was. The assumption was that it was Syrian sponsored, but unless more information has been developed with which I am not acquainted, there seemed no clear indication who had backed Shartouni.

So now Bashir is dead. Some hours later, the Israelis announced that they were moving into Beirut to “restore order”. There was no disorder. People were stunned; the Muslims were extremely apprehensive because they were afraid that the assassination would open them to massacres. The Israelis moved in, over our objections, and took over the entire city. Subsequently some Muslims professed to believe that Bashir had been killed by the Israelis because he had made it clear that he would not front for them. He had had a stormy meeting with Begin during which he had made it clear that he intended to be the President of all of Lebanon. As far as we know, the Israelis did not kill Bashir, but I would guess that they were looking for a pretext to occupy Beirut because they believed that “enemies” lived there and they wanted to get them. The Israelis are big on “enemies”. They did over-run Beirut and killed some people in the process. I don't know who those people were or why they were killed.

On the edge of the city was a neighborhood called Sabra; in its center was a refugee camp called Shatila. The Israelis surrounded Sabra; cut it off completely. They mounted searchlights from buildings nearby to illuminate Sabra and Shatila. They allowed a group of Maronite fighters, all part of the militia, under the command of Eli Hobeika, who had been Bashir's personal bodyguard, and whom I had known well. He was a pathological killer. The group was fairly large. They entered Sabra and Shatila and began to kill people systematically. All the Palestinian fighters had been evacuated; there were almost no adult males. There were elderly men, women and children. By this time, I was in Washington. I was actually at the White House when the report of Bashir's assassination came in. I remember someone asking me who the next President would be; I immediately said it

would be his older brother, Amin, which turned out to be correct. We all became very apprehensive about the Israeli entrance into the city.

Then word came that “something was going on in the camps. As soon as I heard that, I felt sick because I guessed what would be going on. Our political officer, Ryan Crocker, and a couple of newspaper men got into Sabra and Shatila, about 48 hours after the beginning of the massacre. They were absolutely sickened by the mounds of bodies they saw. At a minimum, there were several hundreds of people killed, but the murders were still going on. Then there was an international outcry and the Maronite operation came to a halt. The Maronites withdrew. The Palestinians estimated that 2,000 people were killed; later an Israeli inquiry established the number at 850, which I think was a whitewash. The area stunk with the smell of bodies.

The White House (Bill Clark, the NSC Advisor) was concerned how to handle this massacre with the Israelis without offending the Israelis. There was no way to do it, but that was Clark's tone. He was a nice man who knew nothing about foreign affairs. He had come from California. Clark's skills were primarily those of a domestic political operator, particularly in respect to California. Shultz had just become Secretary replacing Haig. Shultz was very, very cautious about the Middle East. He had been stung at his confirmation hearings for having been perceived as pro-Arab, which was certainly not true. He had been connected with Bechtel, a large construction firm which did some work in the Middle East, but that certainly didn't make him pro-Arab. To say that George Shultz was intimidated is probably inaccurate and inconsistent with his general personality. On the other hand, he went to great, great pains to show that he was not pro-Arab because of these accusations. So he was just feeling his way into the Middle East. The White House wished that Lebanon had never happened because any actions the US might take would have brought it into conflict with Israel.

The President of the United States was strongly pro-Israel. He had an emotional a pro-Israeli bias. He had a romanticized Hollywood view of brave, little Israel. On the other

hand, he was a decent person and was clearly shocked by what was going on. I think he had also been shocked by the savagery of the Israeli attack on Beirut in which some thousands of people were killed by artillery fire and air strikes. Reagan was a nice man, but totally ignorant of foreign affairs.

So at the White House—that means Clark and probably the President, they were very embarrassed by the Israeli entrance into Beirut and then even more embarrassed and shocked by the Sabra and Shatila events. They knew that the United States had given assurances that this would not happen when the PLO fighters were moved out.

I jumped on an airplane and returned to Beirut. Upon arrival I was briefed by my DCM (Bob Pugh) and the Political Officer (Ryan Crocker) about what had happened and was told that the Marines were returning. I was surprised. I won't say shocked because it had occurred to me that that was one of the things that Washington might do. It would also be misleading for me to say that I was adamantly opposed. I was very apprehensive about it. I didn't like the idea that there had been no discussion of this possibility with me while I was in Washington. I remember asking what the Marines' mission would be; I was told by my staff that they didn't know, but only that the Marines were returning.

From then on, we tried to make the best of it. We were always inventing missions, not very successfully, for the Marines. But the Marines landed again; other multi-national forces returned. It was announced that they were “restoring order”. The Israelis reluctantly withdrew from the central part of the city. There were long, long negotiations to get the Israelis away from the airport. We had very much in mind that we wanted the Marines to guard the airport; we wanted to control it. I do not remember how long it took. We are talking about days and even weeks. The Israelis finally gave up the airport. The Marines took over and the airport became the center of American military activity. The French and Italians were down in the city; the Americans were kept out of the city even though they made an occasional patrol. A small British cavalry squadron from Cyprus eventually joined the forces.

Initially, the attitude of most Lebanese of all descriptions was that they were delighted to have these forces, particularly the Americans. They were delighted because it meant Israeli withdrawal. It also in a sense restored confidence. To say that there was euphoria overstates it, but there was definitely a feeling of optimism as the forces arrived. All of the troops, with the exception of the Legionnaires, behaved well. The Americans particularly were very well behaved. So were the Brits and the Italians. The Legionnaires, who were not really French except for their officers, tended to be tough, slightly older Europeans —mostly Eastern Europe probably from the Balkans, some Germans. As we have noted in recent years, people from the Balkans tend not to be terribly friendly to the Muslim populations in general.

The Israelis left the airport. They stayed around the city. There were Israeli troops in the Druze areas. They immediately started to arm both the Druze and the Maronites despite the fact that these were traditional enemies. Why did they do that? Many people were very cynical about that policy and said that the Israelis were arming both sides because they knew that this would destabilize Lebanon. It was more complicated than that. I think there were factions within the Israeli government which traditionally dealt with one group or the other. Certainly within the Israeli Army and indeed in the Mossad as well there were a lot of Maronite connections. Shin Bet (the security forces) had Druze connections. There were also some Druze officers recruited into the Israeli Army. They had not recruited any other Arabs. The Israelis encouraged an assault by the Lebanese Forces—the Maronite militia —on the Shuf. They sent a column, with Israeli encouragement and supplies, deep into the Shuf to a place called Aley. The Druze militia, headed by Walid Jumblatt, had been quiescence all this time and had withdrawn during the Israeli invasion and not opposed. They had withdrawn into their mountain strongholds and had not fought the Israelis. The Israelis, in turn had stayed out of most of the Druze areas and for the most part had left them alone. But then the Lebanese forces invaded the Shuf with the objective of recovering what they considered traditional Maronite areas. Indeed they were partly right; for years there had been Maronite villages, but then they had been expelled. Maronite-

Druze antagonism went back to at least the massacres of 1860. The Maronite forces went up to Aley and got their tails whipped. They were overextended. The Israelis helped and encouraged them, but didn't directly support them. They were deep in Druze territory and the Druze administered a sound beating to the Lebanese Forces who finally withdrew in disorder. The remaining Maronites in villages in the Shuf were expelled and some atrocities were inflicted by the Druze on the Maronites. So it was a very emotional period. I don't know how many Maronites had been left in Druze territory, but it must have been a few thousands. They fled, creating a new flood of refugees into Maronite areas with all attending stories of atrocities. Tensions between Maronites and Druze became very high. Americans, being Americans, were very bothered by all of this. We tend not to like it when people are butchering each other, when populations are being chopped up. There wasn't much we could do about it.

Our general plan, which was not really a bad one, was to try to strengthen the Lebanese Army. That Army was the only institution in Lebanon in which Druze, Shiites, Christians, etc. cooperated. It was the only national institution surviving. It was in perilous condition, but it seemed to hold some hope. I talked to Washington about strengthening the Army. I strongly advocated that policy which many of us saw as making sense. We were eager to try it. We saw the possibility of using the Army as a unifying force. It was one of the places where all factions met and indeed in many cases worked together. The best brigades were essentially Maronite and Shiite. The Druze, even though good fighters, were never effective soldiers because of disaffection. The Sunni traditionally had not been fighters; you didn't find many of them in the military. The traditional soldiers were the Maronites and the Shiites.

So we began to assist the Army. It is sometimes misreported that the Marines were training the Lebanese Army, even though, as a public relations gesture, they did have a few joint activities. In fact, the Marines were not there to train the Army. There was an American group, headed by a Colonel Fintel, which came in. They were excellent. Many of them belonged to the Special Forces. Fintel was an outstanding soldier himself. These

guys were bright enough and sophisticated enough to comprehend some of the complex political situation. The Marines were very good, but were essentially teen-agers and did not grasp the difficult political situation. Their officers were excellent and the total group was very disciplined, which was absolutely essential. They were not well prepared to deal with the complexity of the Lebanese scene, while some of the Special Forces guys were pretty good at it. They had had some previous experience and therefore had a little better feel for the situation. It made sense to try to strengthen the Lebanese government in general and the Army in particular.

In the meantime, Amin Gemayel was elected President, succeeding his assassinated younger brother. I knew Amin fairly well. He had been the “politician” among the brothers. Pierre was the patriarch of the family. Amin was the older son and he was a politician-business man. Bashir was the younger son and was the guerrilla fighter and the conspirator. Superficially, it would have appeared that Amin would be better suited for Presidency. I don't think that was so, and my judgement was borne out later. Furthermore, there had been terrible jealousies between the brothers. Particularly, Amin was jealous because his younger brother had eclipsed him. I didn't realize at the time how serious that friction was. It was some months before I really understood that because of my personal relationship with Bashir I was viewed with suspicion by Amin. Amin did not trust people who had been close to his brother. That was just one of a thousand complications one had to deal with.

In the meantime, Phil Habib shuttled in and out, but his health was deteriorating. The US started a negotiating process in order to effect an Israeli withdrawal from all of Lebanon. The negotiators were Israeli and Lebanese; the Americans were observers. The Syrians were on the sideline, but Habib made several trips to Damascus to keep Assad informed. At one point, Phil had secured a qualified Syrian promise to withdraw if the Israelis withdrew. This is an important point. I remember Phil coming back from Damascus and telling me about his meeting with Assad, who did say that the Syrians would withdraw from the Bekaa Valley. They had been driven out of southern Lebanon and had their air

force knocked out of the skies by the Israelis. Phil said that Assad had said that he would withdraw, but that he would not permit the Israelis to gain any political advantage from their Lebanese invasion. Both Phil and I understood that to mean that the Syrians would withdraw only if the Israelis left Lebanon entirely. The Israelis had no intention of making a clean withdrawal.

The negotiations went on for months. The Israelis dragged them out and dragged them out. Every time, if close to an agreement, the Israelis would find something to object to. The Lebanese did not try to drag them out. It became clearer and clearer that not only were the Israelis going to keep their “security belt” just inside Lebanon, but they wanted an agreement that would permit them to maintain an office in Junieh—the equivalent of an Embassy in the Maronite area. They also wanted to retain certain positions outside their security zone. They wanted explicit agreement that they had a right to intervene in Lebanon in the event of any threat to their interests. Their demands went on and on. The negotiations started in October, 1982. In the Fall of that year, a quick, clean agreement could have gotten both Israeli and Syrian troops out of Lebanon, which was very much what we wanted. By early 1983, that window of opportunity was closed. The Syrians had been rearmed by the Soviets. It was abundantly clear that the Israelis had no intention of a clean withdrawal. The situation was deteriorating in many ways. Phil Habib and then Morris Draper, after Phil just became too ill, tried to encourage the negotiations.

My job was to try to assist the Lebanese in rebuilding a government and an Army. We did have a modest aid program with which we tried to strengthen the central government. Initially, my relationship with President Amin Gemayel seemed quite friendly, but I soon realized that he didn't trust me because I had been close to his brother. I also came to understand that he was himself a very weak person. He was corrupt—not that that was particularly important. He was also a notorious womanizer; so he had a lot of distractions in his life. Yet to be fair to him, I think he sincerely wanted most of the time to be a good

President but didn't know how to do it. It was a job that would have defeated a much stronger man than he was.

The Israelis, particularly in the south, came under increasing pressure. The Palestinians had left the south. The population there was mainly Shiites, although there were Maronite and Greek Orthodox villages. The town of Saida was a Sunni city and Tyre (called Sur by the Arabs) was primarily Shiite. At first, the Israelis were not under any particular pressure from the local population, but that ended fairly quickly. The Israelis behaved foolishly of course. They were poorly disciplined. The locals became disgusted with them. Shiite resistance started, giving rise to a general local demand for an Israeli withdrawal. I was in the south a couple of times when the road was closed because Israeli trucks had been ambushed. There were a lot of banana plantations down there which made excellent cover for guerrilla activities. The roads were narrow and wound through thickly covered territory. The Israelis would come under fire; the Israelis adopted a policy of “reconnaissance by fire”. That meant that they would travel these roads with heavy 50-caliber machine guns mounted on vehicles spraying the road sides. That was supposed to prevent ambushes. Naturally that killed civilians.

I have already mentioned the Israeli encouragement of the Lebanese Forces into the Shuf, which failed miserably. By this time, there were new groups of Maronite refugees. Lebanese groups in the United States mounted a campaign to do something for these refugees. That was just one more complication of being in Lebanon. Stories circulated in the United States which greatly exaggerated the atrocities. There had been some and the refugees had not been treated well. There were also refugees in Damur who were surrounded and cut off. Bad situations were portrayed in the US as truly horrible —something like we are getting today out of Bosnia in regard to the Muslims. These are terrible issues to deal with publicly because it is dangerous and indeed defeating to a policy-maker to get trapped in the position of being an apologist for atrocities or for bad things that are going on. And yet you know that they are exaggerated. So you are constantly in the position of agreeing that people are being murdered, but “there

are not as many as is believed." That is an untenable position and no politician can be in that position. On the other hand, it was clear that the people who kept insisting on the misleading and exaggerated stories concerning the conditions of the refugees, the murders and the atrocities wanted American intervention. It was never practical to think of an American intervention.

Amin Gemayel one day wanted American intervention, the next day he wanted something else, but he persisted in playing his cards as if an American intervention in Lebanon was practical. He later confided to friends, as I found out, that the "American Ambassador had opposed the idea". He came to believe that somehow I was anti-Lebanese and was opposed to those "good" Americans who wanted to intervene in Lebanon, presumably to restore a Maronite supremacy. That became a bone of contention between us. My instructions from Washington were so nebulous that in some sense I could have done anything I wanted. I rarely got any instructions, although I reported and reported. Never any response! I would periodically call Veliotes on the secure phone to find out what was going on, but it was impossible to get any instructions out of the Washington bureaucracy because no one can do anything in Washington, the "checks and balances" really work. A cleared message containing clear instruction to an Ambassador on a difficult, complicated subject is difficult to achieve.

There were individuals who came to Beirut, including senior CIA people. We also had some self-appointed right wing Maronite American-Lebanese, who encouraged Amin Gemayel and the people around him to believe that they had American support and that if they played their cards right, the US would restore Maronite supremacy in Lebanon. This was very mischievous because there was no realistic possibility of anything like that happening. All it did was discourage Amin from making the accommodations that he had to make.

He also had made a cardinal mistake in dealing with the Muslims. I mentioned earlier that Bashir understood that the Shiites had to be dealt with. They were the largest group

and although they had traditionally been at the bottom of society, a new Lebanon meant that they had to be taken seriously. Bashir was prepared to deal with them. He had not, when elected, given anything to the traditional Sunni leadership. Amin reversed that. He chose to ignore the Shiites; he set up relations with the Sunni leadership. They are nice people, the kind that we Americans prefer to deal with. They were well educated, a lot went to A.U.B. They were easy to deal with, so that your tendency was to have relations with these people from these big, very nice Sunni families. The only problem was that the Sunnis had cut themselves off from other Muslims; they had not developed their own militia and had in fact relied on the Palestinians. That had been very convenient since they didn't want their own boys to do any fighting—there may have been a few fighters among them, but basically they had been protected by the PLO. The Shiites, on the other hand had developed their own militia; the Maronites had a strong tradition of fighters and armed forces going way back. The Druze were traditional mountain fighters.

So Amin became chummy with the Sunnis, who couldn't bring much to the table. He ignored the Shiites—not just the Hezbollah, even though this was the era of the rise of that group—extremist, fanatic religious, fundamentalist, with ties to Iran (there were a few Iranian fighters in the Bekaa Valley training Hezbollah). There was a rival group called Amal headed by Nabih Berri, a man I used to see all the time. They were much less extreme than Hezbollah—basically secular and indeed reasonable. Amin didn't want to deal with Nabih or any of the people around him. He didn't like them. He hated the Druze; hated Walid Jumblatt and didn't want to deal with him. So he dealt with Saab Salam, who had been in Lebanese politics forever, and his son, who was not a bad guy. But they couldn't deliver anything. So Hezbollah was getting more and more active, both in the Bekaa and in the south, putting more pressure on the Israelis. In Israel, the public view began to develop that the government had blundered. The invasion of Lebanon, which initially had been popular, was being increasingly criticized as Israeli casualties mounted. There was a lot of criticism of Sharon whose reputation was further tarnished by

his obvious complicity of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila. That brought the Israelis to make some motions toward withdrawal.

That is the way foreign affairs goes. There are the Americans having for a year argued against the Israeli invasion and then for Israeli withdrawal. Then all of a sudden as the situation deteriorated we are trying desperately to negotiate not simply an agreement between the Israelis and the Lebanese, but also between the Maronites and the Druze, while at the same time rearming the Lebanese army. The Israelis then announced their intention to withdraw forcing us to ask them not to. We needed some time. That made the Israelis happy because it permitted them to say that they were ready to withdraw, but the Americans had requested them not to. In the meantime, relations on the ground between Americans and Israelis was going right down the tubes. There were some nasty incidents, almost resulting in fire fights between our Marines and Israeli forces.

Q: Why did this tension arise between American and Israeli troops?

DILLON: The Marines when they landed, were very pro-Israeli, particularly the officer corps. They admired the Israelis as good, professional soldiers; they knew very little about the Arabs. The Marines emphasized discipline; they were neat, clean shaven. The Israelis tended to be a bunch of slobs—dirty, poorly disciplined, particularly when it came to firing. They were always shooting off their guns in all directions. The Israelis on the ground also seemed to feel that the Americans had come in to somehow take advantage of what they had accomplished during the war. They had a great contempt for the Americans. They greatly overestimated their own virtues as fighters; after all they had won easy wars against inferior opponents. So they came to believe their own propaganda. When it became apparent that the Marines would not be led around by the Israelis, that created resentment in the Israelis toward the Marines. The Marines, on other hand, found on the ground—it always happens—that they liked the Arabs and didn't like the Israelis. It was the typical reaction.

There were a number of clashes. Agreements were made where the Israelis would be and where the Marines would be. Then the Israelis would violate them. That was the Israelis sense of humor. They liked nothing better that take a tank column into American lines and then later say that it was all a mistake. You put that together with the Israeli fondness for clearing the roads with machine guns, as I mentioned earlier, and the Marines were not very happy with the Israelis. You will recall the incident where an Israeli lieutenant colonel was assigned to deliberately provoke the Marines. He used to lead tank columns into Marine lines and then pull back. On one occasion he didn't pull back and the Marine officer in charge—a captain—who was fed up with the constant Israeli provocations, finally jumped on an Israeli tank with a pistol in his hand and ordered the tanks to withdraw. The Israelis finally withdrew. Then the Israelis mounted a campaign to show that the Marine officer was drunk, which was an outright lie. He was a born-again Christian who didn't drink. There followed some very nasty exchanges. My friend, Bob Barrow, who by that time had become the Commandant of the Marine Corps, said something publicly supporting his men. He immediately came under public attack from Israeli supporters; he was absolutely astonished by that. Bob was a very straight arrow kind of guy and all of a sudden he was blasted with being anti-Semitic.

Q: That used to be the standard response. We hope that will change.

DILLON: The negotiations, in my view, were going badly. I need to say a word about my friend Morris Draper at this stage. Morris Draper was a very good American diplomat and old friend of mine. He had a very inventive mind. Morris is one of these diplomats who, when two sides have absolute impasse, can always rig something up to get around it. It was the Israelis that were throwing up the road-blocks, not the Lebanese. Every time the Israelis would throw up a road block, Morris would devise one more ingenious way around it. In fact, that was wrong. In fact, he should not have done it. All we did was play the Israeli game because every time Morris would get them out of an impasse, the Israelis would create another one. My own personal relationship with Morris became strained

during this period, although I think it was restored later. I was fed up with the process. I honestly think I was right, even eleven years later, as I look back on that period. It was a mistake to have played the Israeli game.

Then one of those damn personal things happened that can effect the course of history. George Shultz had kept out of all of this, but he was flying to South-east Asia. He had been stung by an article written by Karen House in the Wall Street Journal which in effect questioned his manhood because he was studiously avoiding the Middle East. So he suddenly decided to stop in the Middle East. Just before his arrival, the American Embassy was destroyed on April 18, 1983. A few days later, all American Ambassadors in the area, including me, were invited to Cairo to meet with the Secretary. Habib was there although not in very good health. I was treated very nicely as the survivor of the bombing of the Embassy. I was given a gift by the Secretary. People were very nice to me. I naturally appreciated that kind of treatment. I would have been happier if they had been willing to listen to me, but that was too much to hope for. The subject for discussion was the negotiations between the Israelis and the Lebanese and whether the Secretary should get involved. He felt under political pressure. He also felt that his honor had been challenged by the article. He was therefore strongly tempted to become involved. The advice he got from all his Ambassadors, except Sam Lewis, was negative. Sam Lewis, on the other hand, explained why from the Israeli point of view it was important that he become involved. He spoke of the realities of Israeli politics. Phil Habib did not say anything. The rest of us were forced to expose ourselves in front of all the others. We did not get much response from the Secretary. Phil was able to speak to the Secretary in private. I have never known for sure what Phil told him, but he later told me that he had advised the Secretary not to get involved in the negotiations. As much as I loved Phil and trusted him, I am not sure that was really the advice he gave. I wish I could be sure.

The Secretary chose to get involved in the negotiations. He spent some days in Lebanon. While he was there, the rockets and shells fell all over the place; a lot fell around my house. It was not possible to know who was firing. Some was Druze artillery; there may

have been some Syrian artillery although I don't think so. Clearly, there was a lot of Maronite artillery; some of the rockets came from Shiite launchers. The Israelis continued to be under pressure from Hezbollah. Shultz negotiated under these circumstances. He was a good negotiator; he had made his reputation as a labor negotiator; so he knew something about the negotiating process. The Israelis immediately understood that they had an opportunity to coopt the American Secretary of State. They made some minor concessions. The Lebanese gave in and an agreement, which immediately became a dead letter, was signed in May 1983. The Syrians of course announced that they would not cooperate since they had not been part of the negotiations. George Shultz for the rest of his time as Secretary of State, chose to believe that he had been betrayed by the Syrians. The Syrian government was a lousy government in a lot of ways, but as I mentioned earlier, Habib told me that he had conversations with Assad precisely on this point. I don't think there were any reasons to believe that the Syrians had pledged to withdraw from the Bekaa Valley if an Israeli-Lebanon agreement was reached unless it meant a clean Israeli withdrawal, which was not what the agreement called for. Indeed, it was not even a full withdrawal. But Shultz chose to believe that he had been betrayed. I don't think that Habib felt that the Secretary had been betrayed.

The Syrians then stupidly announced that they would no longer deal with Phil Habib because “he had lied to them.” By this time, it was May 1983. The Israelis were talking about withdrawal. They clearly had developed massive “stay behind” operations, but they were not happy about staying in Lebanon. They were under severe pressure at home where the invasion had become very unpopular. The Americans were desperately trying to piece together not only a Lebanese coalition to govern, but also a Maronite-Druze agreement that was essential to end the fighting between them before the Israeli withdrawal. There were moments of optimism which would come usually when the Lebanese Army looked a little better. The old Lebanese commander, General Khoury had left; he was replaced by General Tannous, a Maronite, whom many of us thought was a better soldier than his predecessor.

By June, 1983, everything was beginning to come apart. The Lebanese Army, particularly those parts that were Maronite, were going to enter the Shuf, which struck me as a dangerous enterprise. The Maronite militia, the Lebanese Forces, had already taken a beating up there. They were going to take over certain positions which they believed would protect Beirut. But just before taking that action, they made a foray into West Beirut from East Beirut where they had been stationed. They took over parts of West Beirut, cleaning out some of the Shiite fighters that had infiltrated into West Beirut. Initially, this action seemed successful, even though the American military advisors who were closely cooperating with the Lebanese Army were apprehensive about this incursion. People were commenting how well the Lebanese Army had done and speculating that their fears may have been misplaced. The incursion did delay the operation into the Shuf by about ten days.

Q: And after that?

DILLON: The daily shelling and rocketing had again become a serious problem. I am surprised that no Americans were killed. We were holed up in the basement of the British Embassy. Sometimes the British Embassy was bracketed by artillery fire, although it never took any direct hits. My house was never hit directly either, but I was concerned. My wife had returned to Beirut and was living in the house which had shells land very near it. We had a fire in the back yard, a piece of the roof was taken off by a rocket. We didn't have any shelter in the house, so Sue and I slept frequently in the pantry so that we would have greater protection. We slept in flak jackets. It was very noisy all night with the all the hardware falling around us.Phil was replaced by Bud McFarlane, the Deputy NSC Advisor who later became well known because of his part in the Iran-Contra scandal. Bud's presence made it quite clear that everything had changed. He and his people were not about to cooperate with people in the Embassy. Indeed, they went to some pains to conceal what they were doing from us. That situation became quite difficult for me. I had of course invited McFarlane and his people to stay at the residence; I later came to

regret that. They moved in and I was stuck with them for several months. That became increasingly difficult. In the meantime, I had told the Secretary that I wanted to leave. I had been reluctant to take that step because I did not want to seem cowardly in leaving my staff, but I realized that I would not be able to make any constructive difference. I felt sure that I would be replaced by someone who would take care of my staff. I didn't think that my relationship with Amin Gemayel would improve. I had been in Lebanon a little over two years and so I asked to be relieved. That offer was accepted immediately, but it took several months before a replacement was named. So I stayed on until October, 1983.

Q: Why was your relationship with McFarlane so difficult. Did he mistrust the Foreign Service? DILLON: Yes. He and his people had all come from the NSC staff. By this time, that staff had established itself as a separate operational unit, somewhat independent in the US government. Part of the problem were the tensions between Shultz and McFarlane. The latter, although number two in the NSC at this time, clearly had ambitions to become number one and eventually Secretary of State. So part of his secrecy was to undercut Shultz. Shultz always pretended not to understand that, even though it was reported to him. McFarlane set up separate communications. He also ordered that although the American Ambassador could attend any meetings that he wanted, none of his staff could. That was intolerable. The American Ambassador had a 24 hour per day job under enormous pressures and the NSC sons-of-bitches were diverting him so that if I wanted to keep track of what they were doing, I would have to do it personally. I remember particularly suggesting that Ryan Crocker be permitted to be present at some of the negotiating sessions as a note-taker. I was informed that the NSC did not trust Crocker (as I mentioned earlier, he is now back in Lebanon as the Ambassador). They didn't trust him because he spoke Arabic and was therefore probably pro-Arab. No one in the NSC group spoke Arabic. None were area experts; they all suffered a little bit from the Vietnam syndrome—meaning that most had been associated with or had served in Vietnam. McFarlane had been a Marine officer there. They believed they had a duty to somehow restore the use of military force as an American policy option.

Q: Both Shultz and McFarlane had been Marines. The President, although never serving in combat, had worn a uniform. Do you think that had any impact?

DILLON: I don't know, but it was an interesting fact that McFarlane and the Marine Corps commander on the spot had a falling out because the latter understood the vulnerability of his men and became very distrustful of adventuresome McFarlane's policy recommendations. McFarlane was then joined by a military advisor—Brigadier General Carl Stiner who is now the senior officer in the American army in charge of unconventional warfare. He is in a command down in Florida, which is the headquarters for that activity. It was also the headquarters for our recent Gulf intervention. Stiner was not a bad officer; he was very adventuresome. He was a funny guy from east Tennessee, with a real hill-billy accent. He was a muscular little man, who had been a great fighter in Vietnam—Special Forces. Stiner immediately set up his own communications with the Pentagon at my swimming pool. It was secure voice communications so that no one knew what he was reporting. So we had CIA trying desperately to stay in the game—they were communicating directly with Washington. Then there was the Ambassador and his staff who was supposed to be the chief channel communicating through the State Department. Then there was Bud McFarlane communicating directly with the NSC. It was a text-book version of how not to run things. The American Ambassador, as I look back, wasn't accomplishing much, but was duty bound to try to get on top of all of this. It was very difficult; there was very little cooperation in Washington because the Secretary of State wanted to stay out of it. Veliotes supported me and I appreciated that. His staff in NEA supported me. Otherwise, there was no support whatsoever from Washington.

My deputy, Bob Pugh, had been a Marine officer. I was a friend of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Bob Barrow, who had been my boss on the China off-shore islands during the Korean War. Then he was a major; by 1983, it was General Robert H. Barrow. So I had good relations with the Marines. In any case, McFarlane and Co. were constantly coming up with schemes that would have required naval gun-fire or forays from ships

anchored off the coast. To give them credit, the serving officers mainly resisted these ideas. They really did. So whenever I am inclined to be angry with the military, which is frequent, I remember that the officers, particularly those who had infantry experience and therefore knew about killing and being killed, were particularly negative on the use of force. When you understand how nasty warfare really is and what it is like on the ground with people being killed and you are killing people, you become much more cautious about intervention than people who see intervention in terms of air strikes and naval gun-fire. It is not a question of cowardice—I am not suggesting that the guy on the ground is any braver than the one in the airplane, but the guy on the ground really doesn't want to be there. So they see military operations from a different perspective.

That has always been on my mind. With all due respect for the Air Force, I find that people like that are more likely to think in terms of intervention than an infantry man. Now it doesn't always work that way. A guy like McFarlane who had been an artillery officer and certainly General Stiner who was a good infantry officer, loved the idea of intervention. But most of the ground guys did not. Certainly, the Marine officers who were on the ground around the airport, realized their vulnerabilities. They were on a piece of flat land, increasingly under fire from the surrounding hills, in insufficient strength and without adequate heavy weapons. It was just a battalion landing team—a reinforced battalion —which at any one time averaged between 1,000 and 1,400 men. In theory, they had artillery—i.e. ship fire off-shore, but had nothing on the ground. A heavy Army unit would have been far more suitable as it turned out than a Marine unit. So the Marine officers on the ground, although aggressive young men the way Marines must be, were really fairly apprehensive about American involvement which would have forced them to take up arms on one side or another. Therefore the Marine officers were in increasing opposition to Bud McFarlane and his team.

Q: Who was McFarlane negotiating with and against whom did he intend to intervene?

DILLON: He had decided that his mission was to support Amin Gemayel. The remaining opponents of Gemayel, with the PLO gone, were the Druze. The first big clash between McFarlane and me came when he went to see Amin and didn't take me along. Amin told him that the Americans had made the “colossal political mistake” of taking Walid Jumblatt —the hereditary chief of the Druze—seriously and that had build up Jumblatt artificially. He said that if the Americans broke relations with Jumblatt, then he, Amin, would be successful in establishing himself and his government in Druze areas. It was a wildly unrealistic scenario. It was nonsense. To Amin's delight, McFarlane accepted this theory and came back and announced to the White House, where Bill Clark was still the NSC Advisor, that he had promised the President of Lebanon that the American Ambassador's contacts with the Druze would be cut off. I immediately protested. There was a series of telegrams back and forth. Washington did what Washington always does: nothing! It argued and sat there. Lines were drawn. The State Department and the NSC went at each other hammer and tongs; the CIA stood by and watched the proceedings. McFarlane was clearly so wrong that eventually about six weeks later, without a decision ever being made, McFarlane, without admitting that he had been wrong, withdrew his objections and in fact, personally started dealing with the Druze. He met with Jumblatt in Geneva. So the whole program collapsed, but it illustrated the problems of dealing with people who don't understand the situation on the ground.

I don't want to cover the day-to-day sequence of events. It would just take too long. Eventually, the Israelis did withdraw, at the worst time, of course. Immediately, fighting broke out on a large scale between the Druze and the Maronite parts of the Lebanese Army. The rest of the Lebanese Army at this point completely disintegrated. The Druze deserted as did most of the Muslims. There were a few Shiites still fighting, but the main remaining Lebanese Army troops were Maronite. They were placed in the hills above my house—about five miles in the Shuf—at a place called Souk el Garb, which was a very important cross-road.

In September, the real crunch came. The Israelis had withdrawn. Fighting broke out at Souk el Garb. The Lebanese Army brigade up there commanded by Brigadier General Michel Aoun—a good, tough little son of a bitch. He was under heavy pressure from the Druze. There was a question of whether there would be a break-out at Souk el Garb. There was a considerable amount of disagreement among the Americans about what would happen. It is very difficult to prove the negative. The people at the Embassy were not convinced that a break-out was imminent; they were also not convinced that any Americans would be in danger even if the break-out occurred. Bud McFarlane was convinced that the Lebanese government would be over-thrown and that the Americans were in danger if there were a break-out. At that point he got into a spat—about which I didn't find out until later—with Colonel Tim Geraghty who commanded the Marines at the airfield. McFarlane wanted naval gun-fire to support the Lebanese Army. Geraghty felt very exposed and thought that his Marines would pay the price of retribution for such naval shelling. It was not until several months later that I learned of this dispute. One day, I returned to my house; McFarlane was in the radio shack that we had erected in the back yard. He had a message in his hand which he showed me. It was a message requesting that gun fire from the ships off shore be authorized because of the imminent danger of a break-out at Souk el Garb. The justification was that the break out would endanger the Americans in Lebanon, because if the Druze broke out, they would over-run my house and we would all be butchered. I didn't think that would happen because we had good relations with the Druze and that therefore we would not be direct targets, although there is always the possibility of some stray ammunition. So I was surprised and very concerned. I doubted that in fact the situation was as dangerous as McFarlane described, but I also considered the consequences if my assumptions were wrong. I didn't know everything. I wanted some time to consult my staff, but McFarlane said there was no time for that. In later years, I wished of course that I had stopped the message, but I didn't. I thought that Bud was probably wrong, but I could not be certain. So the message was sent. It was not immediately acted upon in Washington. I wished I had known at that point that Colonel Geraghty was protesting. The fact was that there was no single American leader

in Lebanon. What we had in Lebanon was a bunch of disparate American elements, with no one designated to be in charge. The American Ambassador should have been in charge of both civilian and military components. But McFarlane was a Presidential Envoy not under me, and deployed troops, e.g. the Marines. So we had a lot of bickering and in my view, a shameful situation. I was very bothered by it all. I had great difficulty in finding out what McFarlane and his team were doing. I suddenly became aware that they were lying to me. I remember one of the guys, after talking to me, walking away and saying: “I hate to lie to an American Ambassador” and everybody laughed. They didn't realize that I could overhear the conversation.

Then two things happened. The Lebanese brigade held its ground even though under very vicious assaults. Bud's message said that the Maronites were being attacked by Syrians and PLO, none of which was true. There were some Druze officers from the Syrian Army that had been seconded to the Druze forces. There were no PLO forces involved. But the naval gun fire did start , first from destroyers and later from the battleship New Jersey. It fired its 16 inch guns, which was the first time in a long time that the Navy had found a role for these huge ships and guns. Sixteen inch shells are huge and very indiscriminate. We ended up killing Druze villagers; it didn't effect the outcome of the fighting in any way. We also ran some air strikes which were similarly ineffective. One American plane was shot down and its pilot was captured.

Finally, my replacement was announced: Reg Bartholomew. He had been a senior civil servant, always in politico-military affairs. I think George Shultz thought that putting Bartholomew out there, with his politico-military background was a way for State to reassert itself. If that was his idea, it was not very realistic. Shultz also thought in terms of negotiations which were not a problem. So I left on October 11, 1983. Eleven days later, a truck filled with explosives drove into the American building at the air field and killed 242 Marines. I was personally very affected by that event. The Marines were just teen-agers; they should not have been there.Then I had the happy experience for the next few of weeks along with some other people, including the new Commandant of the Marine Corps,

explaining to various committees of Congress what happened and answering a lot of “stop beating your wife” kind of questions. I talked about the absence of a single command. I told the truth as I had observed it; it was too late not to. It was a terrible position to be in particularly if you have even the slightest sense of loyalty to the system because you had to be self-serving or defensive. I have seen many others doing that. But you are put in a position of having to say: “Well, no, I was the Ambassador, but I did not set up the Marines' defensive positions; Marine officers did that. No, I did not lay down the rules of engagement for the marines. I was briefed on the rules, but that issue was a military one. The question of whether the sentries had rounds in their chambers was an issue for Marine officers to decide.” You end up feeling very defensive and self-serving, even through all was the simple truth. Geraghty's career was ruined as were the careers of the other Marine officers. That was sad because they were good officers. Lieutenant Colonel Gearhart who was responsible for the defense of the Marine's posts was crippled for life. It was all very, very sad.

I was outraged in general at the Reagan administration. I was very unhappy with the State Department, very unhappy with George Shultz and not very happy with myself. I did believe that my staff and I had behaved honorably and that was about the best that could be said about us. I was outraged at the Israelis; I am still angry at their supporters. I found myself in front of Congressional committees, trying to answer some serious, some frivolous questions from some self-serving Congressman about what went on in Lebanon.

Suddenly, you find yourself under political attack because Marine casualties were taken out of Lebanon, even though the attack happened eleven days after my departure. The injured Marines were taken to hospitals in Germany; they were not taken to Israel. There were suspicions that this was done because the Marine officers were anti-Semitic. I didn't have any role in the decision of where the Marines were evacuated. They went to Germany because the military had a system and a large military establishment in Germany which was set up to handle situations like this. When the American military had a disaster on their hands, they didn't look for political gestures—like flying casualties to Israel and

putting them into Israeli hospitals, which may have been very good. They followed the prescribed systems and flew them to Germany. It took a couple of hours longer, but for me or General P.X. Kelley, the Commandant, to sit in front of a congressional committee and deal with questions that at a time when there were real problems and real questions to be examined about events in Lebanon, was absolutely outrageous. But that was in fact what happened. The questions went on and on about whether the Marine sentries had rounds in the chambers of their rifles and who was responsible for that. It wouldn't have made any difference, although it did turn out that they did not have any rounds in their chambers. They had magazines in their weapons, but to prepare to fire, they would have had to pull back the bolts and slide them forward. This was because the Marine officers were very concerned about fire discipline. They didn't want Marines shooting at other Marines; they didn't want Marines shooting civilians.

It was a very sad experience for me. I had already made up my mind that I wasn't going back to the Foreign Service. At least, a while. I had been contacted by the UNRWA Commissioner General, a Swedish diplomat, whom I had met in Lebanon. He wanted an American deputy. So, on January 2, 1984, I went to Vienna on secondment from the Foreign Service and became the Deputy Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to the rank of assistant secretary general in the U.N. which carried a nice tax-free stipend with it—certainly more than I made in the Foreign Service. I spent the next four years and nine months in that job. In 1987, I concluded that whatever happened, I would not go back to the Foreign Service and I retired. I stayed on at UNRWA for another year, traveling throughout the Middle East although the headquarters and my home were Vienna. In September, 1988, I accepted the job as President of Amideast which is that I am doing right now.

Q: Can we go back to the time that the Embassy was blown up? How were its functions carried on?

DILLON: I forget how large a staff we had at the time. It had grown again to a medium size Embassy. In the first place, we were supporting a number of operations, such as the Habib Mission, which by that time was headed by Draper. We had a military cooperation team, who were located in the Embassy. We had a small AID group—seven or eight people—who were assisting the Government of Lebanon in various ways. We had a very active consular section. We had me, not only trying to keep up with negotiations with the Amin government, but also dealing with all the American groups that had an interest in Lebanon. I was flooded by Maronite groups, Armenian groups—all of whom were descending on Beirut to make sure that their countrymen were being properly treated and that they were getting sufficient attention from the American Ambassador. I hope that the American Ambassador was reassuring because I did give all of these groups my attention. It was an exhausting job; you are literally working 14-16 hours per day. The underground warfare between the Turks and the Armenians in Lebanon was also beginning to be troublesome. There were murders on both sides. Many, many Lebanese were anxious to go to the States or to send their children to the States. The consular section was under tremendous pressure. The USIA program, which was trying to do a little bit for the American image with limited resources—two or three people—was under the direction of John Reid, who was first class and a wonderful guy. John was trying to run his program and acted as my spokesman and press advisor and occasionally as a speech writer. I don't know how he did it all. Pugh, the DCM, was running a lot of the day-to-day stuff and also the liaison with the military. He did a magnificent job and later got all sorts of awards—as many medals as the State Department can give. The Political Section—Ryan Crocker and a couple of young officers—worked very closely with me because they were trying to keep track of what was going on in Lebanon. We were also trying to have some input into the negotiations. It was an extraordinarily busy period. Our wives were in Beirut with us, but we did not allow dependent children. There were days when I must admit it was fun. As any Foreign Service officer does, I love a fast moving, exciting operational situation. I liked my staff. They were good. Oddly, morale was high. When they did a report back in NEA, I was pleased when they said that despite everything that happened, the Lebanon mission

had the highest morale of any mission in the Near East. I think that was because people were so wrapped up in what they were doing.

The Lebanese being Lebanese were still fairly active socially. A lot of it stemmed from the wealthy Maronites in the hills above us. The contrast between the wealthy Maronite establishments just to the east and north of us and the terrible conditions in West Beirut and in the south will forever remain vivid in my mind. I could literally spend a day down at Ain el Hilweh, which was the largest refugee camp—it housed 50,000—which had been leveled. It stunk of dead bodies; people were living in the worst imaginable miseries. A few hours later, I would be back at an elegant party in the hills above Jounieh.

Q: Do you have any speculation about why the Embassy was bombed?

DILLON: It turns out that the Embassy was hit essentially by Hezbollah, even though that was not clear at the time. Hezbollah had Iranian support. It was simply a blow at the most visible symbol of American presence. It was during the time when the car bomb had become very common; it was not however the suicide car bomb, but just cars that were loaded with explosives and left in the streets. A deserted car became an object of great suspicion. We had cleared the area around the Embassy; cars were not allowed to park around the Embassy because of the possibility of a car bomb. The suicide car bomber was something new. The Iraqi Embassy had been destroyed a year earlier in a gigantic blast, but we never found out what had happened. There was suspicion that that had been a suicide bomber, who had driven a car bomb (a white Mercedes) underneath the Embassy. The suspicion was that the driver had stayed in the car and had killed himself.

The Iraqis and the Iranians were of course enemies. They were at war. There was the traditional Sunni-Shiite split. There were other issues involved. We did not learn a lesson from that, particularly that we would be a target for a suicide attack. We had discussed the possibility, but when you try to make a decision about security arrangements, you stress the more likely events which we thought would be episodes that gave the bombers

a chance to get away before the blast, as might be in the American tradition. Americans sometimes engage in suicidal attacks, but not in suicide attacks. A suicidal attack is one which is understood that chances of survival are not very good. The suicide attack on the other hand is one in which one's willingness to die is the attack itself. That is an important distinction.

We kept improving the Embassy's defenses, but were devoting more attention to the suicidal attacks than the suicide. No cars were permitted to be parked around the Embassy. The building itself stood in a very busy part of town. The traffic, as long as it kept moving, was allowed on the main street. We were constantly under small rocket attack; it was so common that we didn't think much about it, even though the small rockets —RPGs—could be very destructive. They were much more destructive than the old bazookas. Our strategy was to keep them at a distance. We had ordered some barriers to be set up so that the Embassy could not be rammed. Ironically, when the Embassy was blown up, the barriers had arrived but had not yet been put in place. We had not yet seen the suicide bomber as a principal weapon. We had seen it as a possibility. It was used against us very effectively. The only way we could have prevented it—as we did when we moved into the British Embassy—was to put barriers at a distance and prevent any vehicle from approaching the building.

Frequently, the British Embassy was bracketed by shells, although I don't know whether it was a target. Heavy shells are frightening things; they do a lot of damage and make you feel completely helpless. But the British Embassy was never hit. There were craters around the Embassy, but the building itself was never hit. We were, as I mentioned, in the basement and therefore relatively well protected. As I said before, we were very busy and did our best to operate out of that basement. We did some reporting. Ryan Crocker reported brilliantly. I did a lot of the reporting. Pugh was the operational manager of the Embassy. Military attach#s are usually not good reporters and ours weren't, but our attach# was reporting some good stuff. The Agency people were busy trying to recreate some of their disrupted networks. They remained involved—in retrospect probably in

a dangerous way—with the Maronites. That had been their traditional connection in Lebanon. It is customary for the Agency to have some connection with the right wing groups in any country. So the Agency was in touch with the Maronites and some Armenian groups.

The overall policy problem was the question of the Israelis. What we really needed was a fast, clean withdrawal and that could have been worked out. It would have been accompanied by a Syrian withdrawal. I am convinced that in the Fall, 1982 that could have been accomplished. By the Spring, 1983, when George Shultz became involved, it was too late. When Shultz was told that, he became angry and felt that “his” representatives, including me, were negative. He never said that to my face; he was very polite to me. But I was told later that Shultz saw me as negative, which is too bad because that is not the way I am. As a matter of fact, if I have a fault, I tend to be overly positive. I am basically a positive person. I think there were many times in my career when I persisted in being positive longer than I should have. So if George Shultz found me negative, it bothered me.

In any case, I have described what life in Beirut was like. It wasn't awful until the McFarlane crowd moved in. At that point it really became awful.

Q: Where were you when the bomb went off? How did the Department of State respond after the event?

DILLON: The staff in the Department of State in these kinds of situations always responds well because they are unambiguous situations and they know what needs to be done.

I was in my office on the eighth floor. It was the middle of the day on April, 18, 1983. It had been a little quieter than it had been. I had resumed my jogging. I was getting ready to go to AUB with my security escorts, which numbered about ten by this time. They would take over the field and keep everybody at a distance, while the American Ambassador would jog about three miles around the track. So I was ready to go. I had just had a phone call from a German banker who worked for El Mashtek Bank, half of which was owned

by Morgan Guaranty. I knew what the call was about because I had talked to a friend of mine, Rod Wagner, who was a senior officer at Morgan. The issue was more a Jordanian problem than a Lebanese one. I didn't return the call because I didn't feel like discussing the matter just at that time. So I finished what I was doing. My Lebanese social secretary had just been to see me—it was the last time I ever saw her. On the day before, we had held a marathon in Beirut and held a party afterwards. One of my bodyguards had a little too much to drink at that party and was hung over the next morning. He stayed with me while the other security forces went downstairs to wait for me. I started to undress and then I felt guilty about not having taken the call from the German banker. So I called him back and while talking to him, I stood in front of a window as I struggled to put on a heavy Marine T-shirt. All of a sudden, the window blew in. I was very lucky, because I had my arm and the T-shirt in front of my face which protected me from the flying glass. I ended up flat on my back. I never heard the explosion. Others said that it was the loudest explosion they ever heard. It was heard from a long distance away.

As I laid on the floor on my back, the brick wall behind my desk blew out, Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The wall fell on my legs; I could not feel them. I thought they were gone. The office filled with smoke, dust and tear gas. What happen was that the blast first blew in the window and then traveled up an air shaft from the first floor to behind my desk. We had had tear gas canisters on the first floor. The blast set them off so that the air rush that came up through the shaft brought the tear gas with it and also collapsed the wall. I was on the floor cursing away believing that the Embassy had been hit by a rocket. We had been hit by a rocket a week earlier and I thought we had a repeat performance. I was angry as someone gets when you are attacked and you want to lash back even though you are flat on your back and helpless. I couldn't move. In a few minutes, Bob Pugh, my secretary, and Tom Barron, our administrative officer, came in. They were all covered with dust because the walls of their offices had also collapsed, but fortunately they were able to get out quickly because they had not been pinned down. They grabbed the flag staff and pried up the wall a little so I could wriggle out. I looked at my legs and to my

immense pleasure, found out that they were still there and functioning. I was cut by the glass everywhere, except in the face because, as I said, my face had been protected. I had cuts and bruises and small pieces of glass in me, particularly in my arms. They itched terribly. It wasn't so much pain as itching.

So I was in pretty good shape. The others were in good shape. We all started to cough and to wretch from the tear gas. Someone vomited, as I recall. We got out through a window and stood on a little ledge outside. A gust of wind came along and cleared the air. That made us feel much better. We didn't know what had happened. The central stairway was gone, but the building had another stairway, which we used to make our way down, picking our way through the rubble. We were astounded to see the damage below us. I didn't realize that the entire bay of the building below my office had been destroyed. I hadn't grasped that yet. I remember speculating that some people had undoubtedly been hurt. As we descended, we saw people hurt. Everybody had this funny white look because they were all covered with dust. They were staggering around.

We got to the second floor, still not fully cognizant of how bad it was, although I recognized that major damage had been done. With each second, the magnitude of the explosion became clearer. I saw Marylee MacIntyre standing; she couldn't see because her face had been cut and her eyes were full of blood. I picked her up and took her over to a window and gave her to someone. A minute later, someone came up to me and said that Bill MacIntyre was dead; he had just seen the body. That was the first time I realized that people had been killed. I didn't know how many, but I began to understand how bad the blast had been. Bill had been the chief of the AID section. I felt sick. We staggered to a window where someone had put up a ladder and we climbed down on that.

Next to our building was a large apartment house where the DCM lived and which held some temporary offices. We went there and immediately called Washington and reported what had happened. By this time, rescue workers, police and American reporters had arrived. We found our personnel officer and put together a roster of all the people we

thought would have been in the building. We then checked off those that we knew were still alive. We understood that it would be sometime before the rubble could be fully searched for bodies. We wanted to report the names of survivors as quickly as possible. Pugh and the security guys were back at the Embassy, supervising the rescue operations. I was on the phone to Washington. We went over our roster trying to give Washington all the information we had on our personnel. After a while, we ran out of information; we looked at the roster and there were many, many people on whom we had no information. That really shook us.

Then I went back to the Embassy, joining the mass confusion. I remember two things. One was John Reid, the PAO, who asked me to come to talk to the newsmen who had assembled. I didn't know what to tell them. Reid was a great man; he stuck a piece of paper in my hands and said: “Here's what you say!”. That is what you need in these cases. So I walked out in front of the TV cameras, still wearing my T-shirt, dust in my hair, looking beaten up and stood up in front of the cameras and acted as if I had done this every day of my life. I made my statement and took a few questions. Reed tugged my elbow and pulled me away. I tell this story first to give a plug to John Reid and second to illustrate why you need staff, why you need professionals like John Reid. My concern was what happened to the Embassy and the finding of the survivors, but from the point of view of the United States it was important that the media be addressed with dignity and a display of courage, even if a little false. We had to give the impression that terrorism would not change our policy course. That is what I intended to convey and people later kindly said that that was what I did. Then I returned to the building.

We were digging out. The last alive person was brought out five hours after the explosion. The last one was a Mr. Kopty, who was one of our Lebanese employees. He looked like a piece of hamburger; I did not recognize him. Someone had to tell me who he was; I never thought he would live. Anne Damarel, one of the AID employees, came out and I thought she would not live. After about five hours, we didn't find anymore people alive. In the end there were 62 or 63 dead. We continued digging for five days, searching through

the wreckage, bringing out bodies, sometimes pieces of bodies, identifying people. It was very sad. There were families of the missing Lebanese employees standing around and waiting. There were families of people who had been in the Embassy on business. There were families of people who had simply disappeared. We found bodies of people who had been blown into the sea while walking past the Embassy. Finally, after five days, we quit. By that time, all we were finding were scraps of people. It was very difficult to talk to the families, particularly when we couldn't find the missing member. The families were stunned. They were very quiet. There was no shrieking as you sometimes get. These families were stunned and exhausted and weeping, but on the whole surprisingly quiet. It was terrible.

I and the other Americans were busy. Somehow we were all functioning very normally, working hard. We had become so busy, so wrapped up in the mess in hand, we shut out the enormity of the catastrophe.

Q: It must have been very much how troops in combat react.

DILLON: Very much. We acted surprisingly normal, although we were really not. A psychiatrist was sent out from the Department of State. I think it was the same doctor I saw after the terrorist attack in Kuala Lumpur. He talked to us. I remember saying to him: “I am surprised how normal I feel”. He told me that was a normal and typical reaction. The defensive mechanism that we all have inside had come to the fore. If we didn't have that mechanism, we could not have functioned. That made me feel better, because I was concerned about my reaction.

I didn't break down until about ten days later. I went to the AUB chapel to talk to the families of those who had died. It was a memorial service and they were all there. John Reid had helped me to write out a brief talk. I stood there, looking at these very sad and unhappy faces and they in turn were looking at the American Ambassador as if he would be able to say something that would make everything well. So there I was looking at all

these people, whose family members had been blown to pieces. I got most of the way though the speech. When I got to the last sentence, a sob welled up and I stopped. I couldn't say anything more. I was in tears. I felt so inadequate and sad looking at all those people. People would have liked to hear that their relatives died for some noble cause. They didn't! Within a few minutes, I recovered, but it was one of the saddest moments in my life in that chapel. I wished I could have done something for those people. To my surprise, years later the son of a man who had been killed told me how much my words had meant to him and to his mother.

The British Ambassador, a good guy, immediately invited us to use his Embassy. We took over the basement. He told London afterwards, which upset the Foreign Office, but it was too late by then. We were already ensconced. In general, I find that people behave well in these kind of circumstances. We got good support from other Embassies as well —the Canadians and the British were the first, as usual, but everybody tried to help. The Lebanese relief people were good, but unfortunately there were also some looters among them. That is one of the reasons people became relief workers because they had an opportunity to loot the dead. That happens in many places, not just Lebanon. It is sad to say, but it is a fact.

The AUB hospital had become so good over the years treating people like ours that we didn't feel the need to evacuate them. Eventually, we did, but their first care was at the AUB hospital.

My outrage over Lebanon has shaped my career. After that I wanted to do things that were vaguely humanitarian or educational. I guess that is what I am doing now. Eventually, I wanted to come home because although Vienna is a nice place, it is Austria and not the United States. By the time I left Austria, I had spent more than 26 years overseas, going back to the China coast days.

End of interview